

Brittany with Bergeré

William M. F. Whitelock

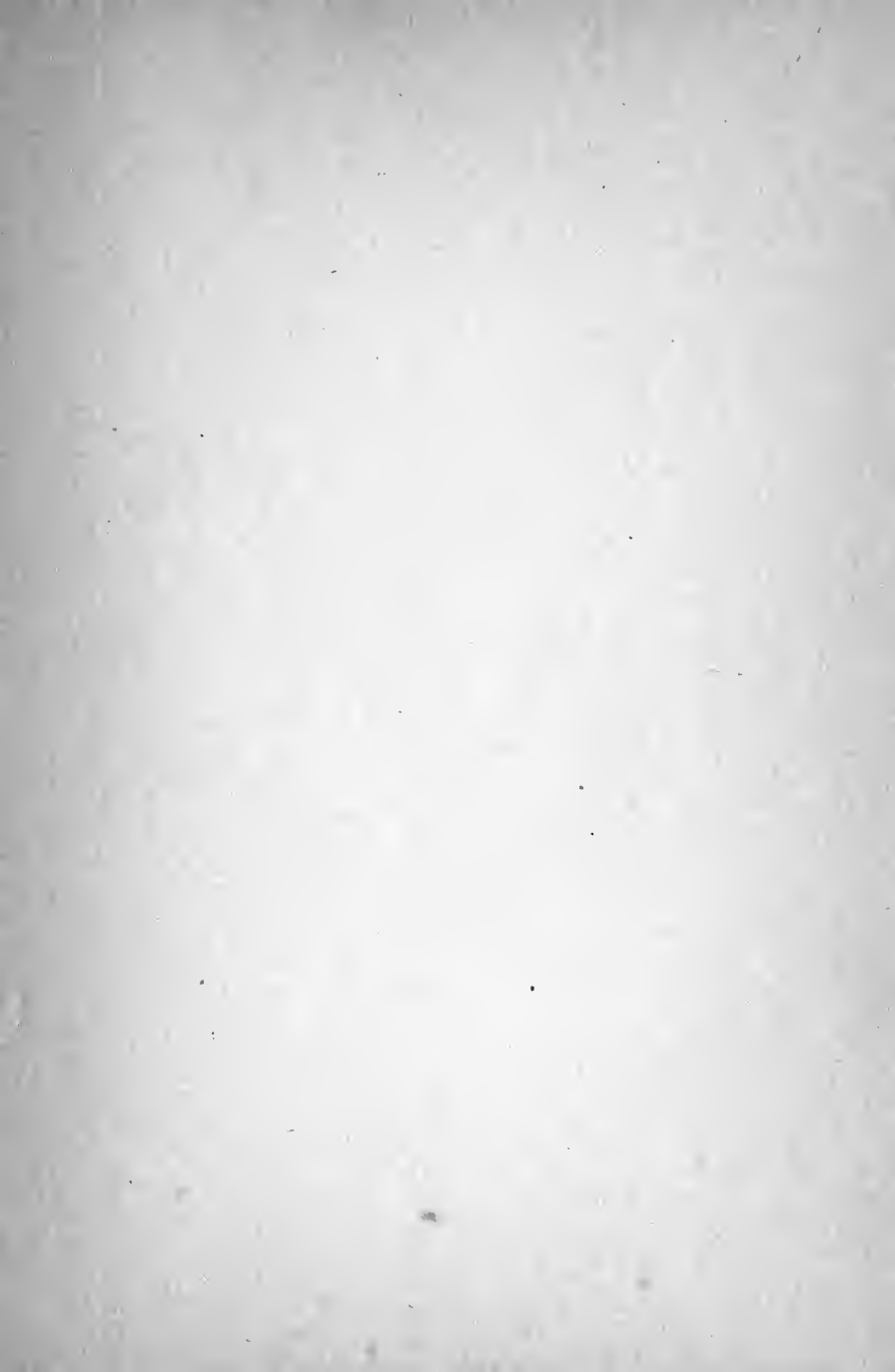


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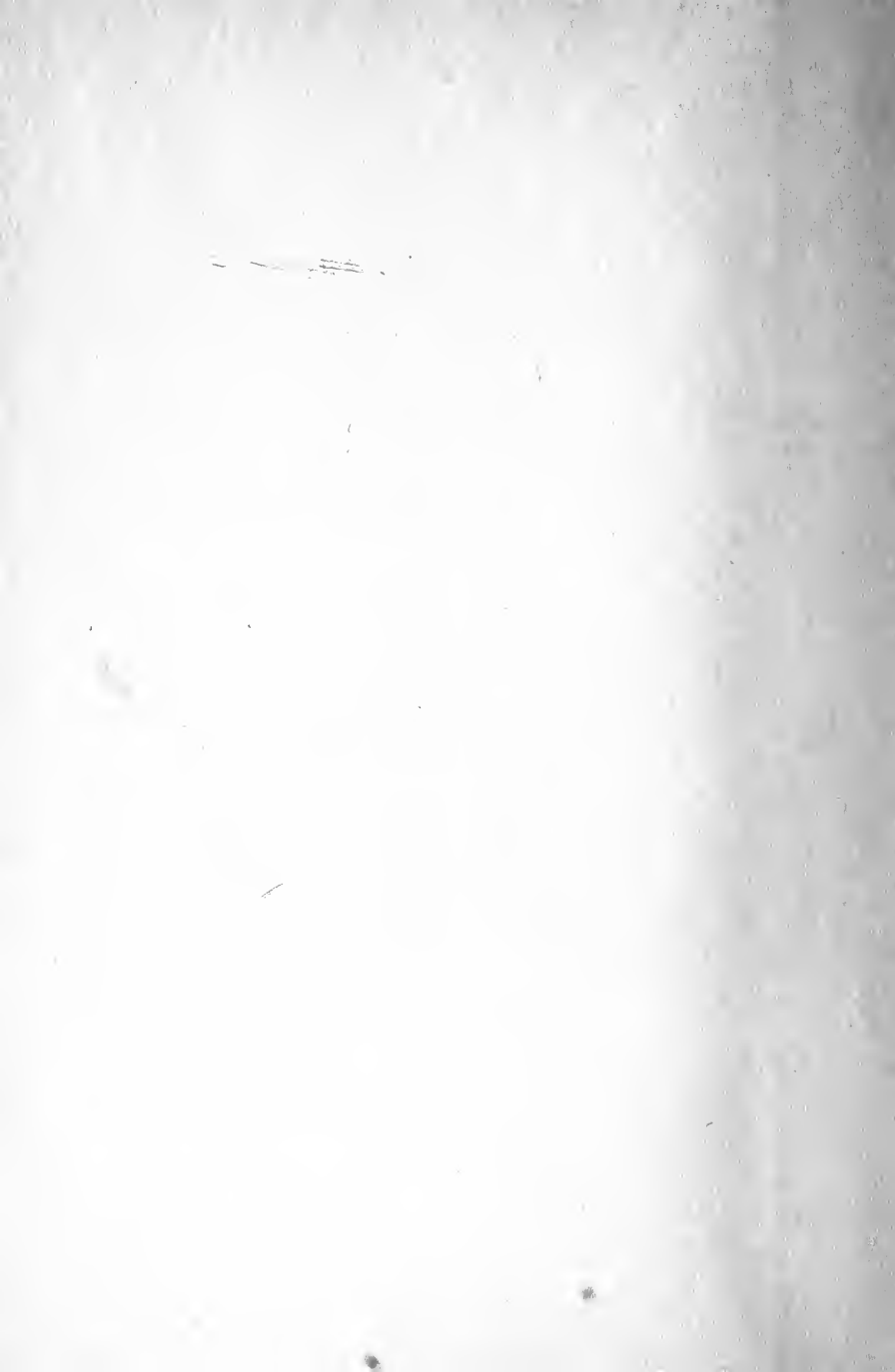
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*A long haired creature lead-
ing a fox by a string.*

Brittany with Bergère

BY

WM. M. E. WHITELOCK

WITH PICTURES BY
DECIMA



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no 1

To
CHARLES TOWNSEND COPELAND
Guide, Philosopher, and Friend
This Book Is Dedicated



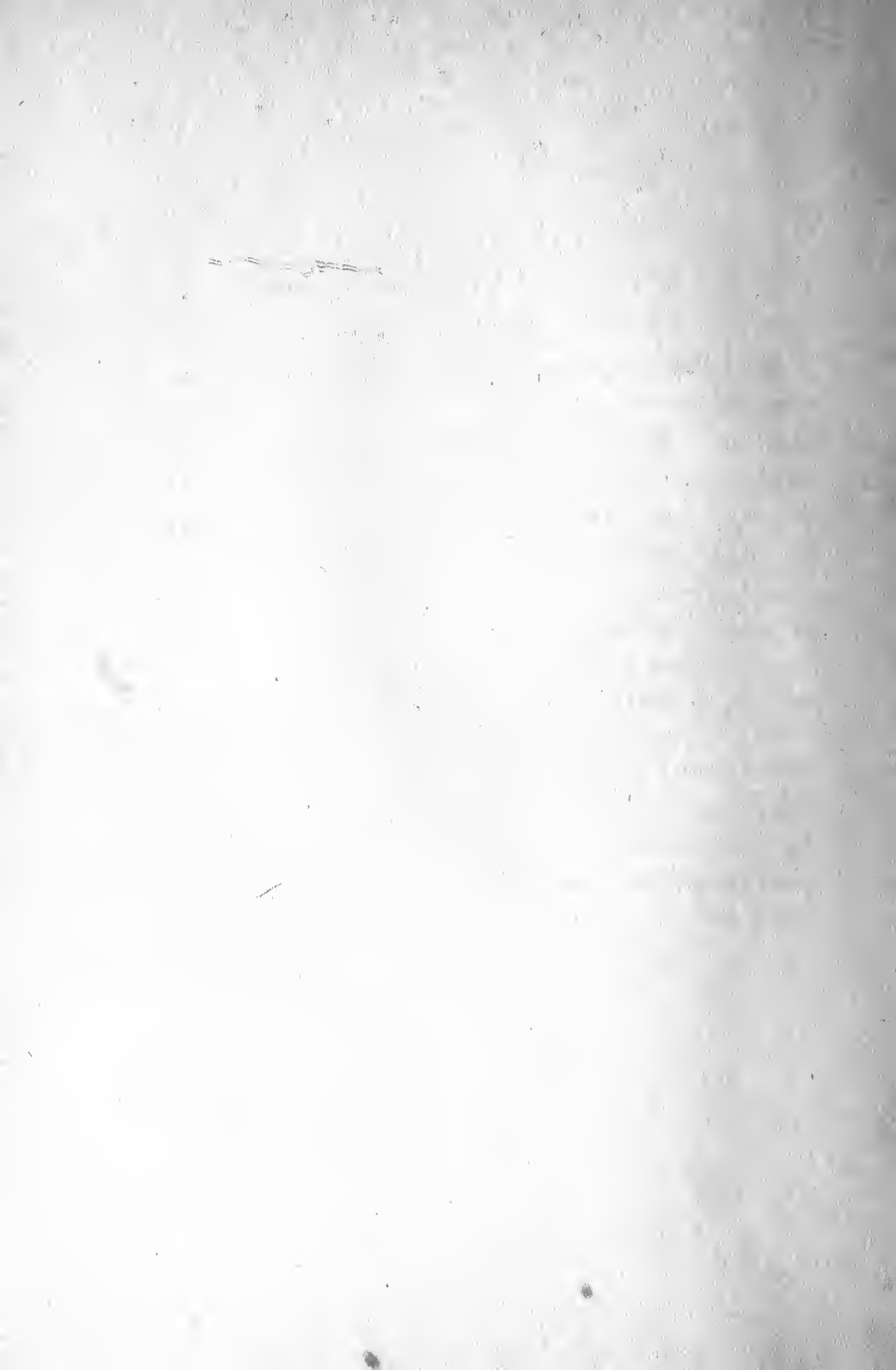
FOREWORD

I HAVE not aimed in this little book to give a comprehensive picture of Brittany and the Bretons; such a picture was not in the focus of a three weeks' trip in a dog-cart. Far less have I endeavored to set forth the customs, the history, the monuments of the country; these have been already amply recorded. Rather have I sought to imprison the elusive spirit of a happy, unfettered ramble, to sketch lightly the color, the warmth, the music of it all — truly, an almost impossible task for cold prose. Yet, if I have been able to give some faint idea of the magic charm of Brittany, its simple, unspoiled people and their simple, placid life; if I have been able to hint at the joy of such a trip as ours and the ease with which it is made; if, above all, I have been able to suggest unrealized possibilities to those who love to see a country as it really is, I shall feel that I have not entirely failed in my purpose. At least I can know that the pleasure of writing these few chapters has not been wholly selfish.



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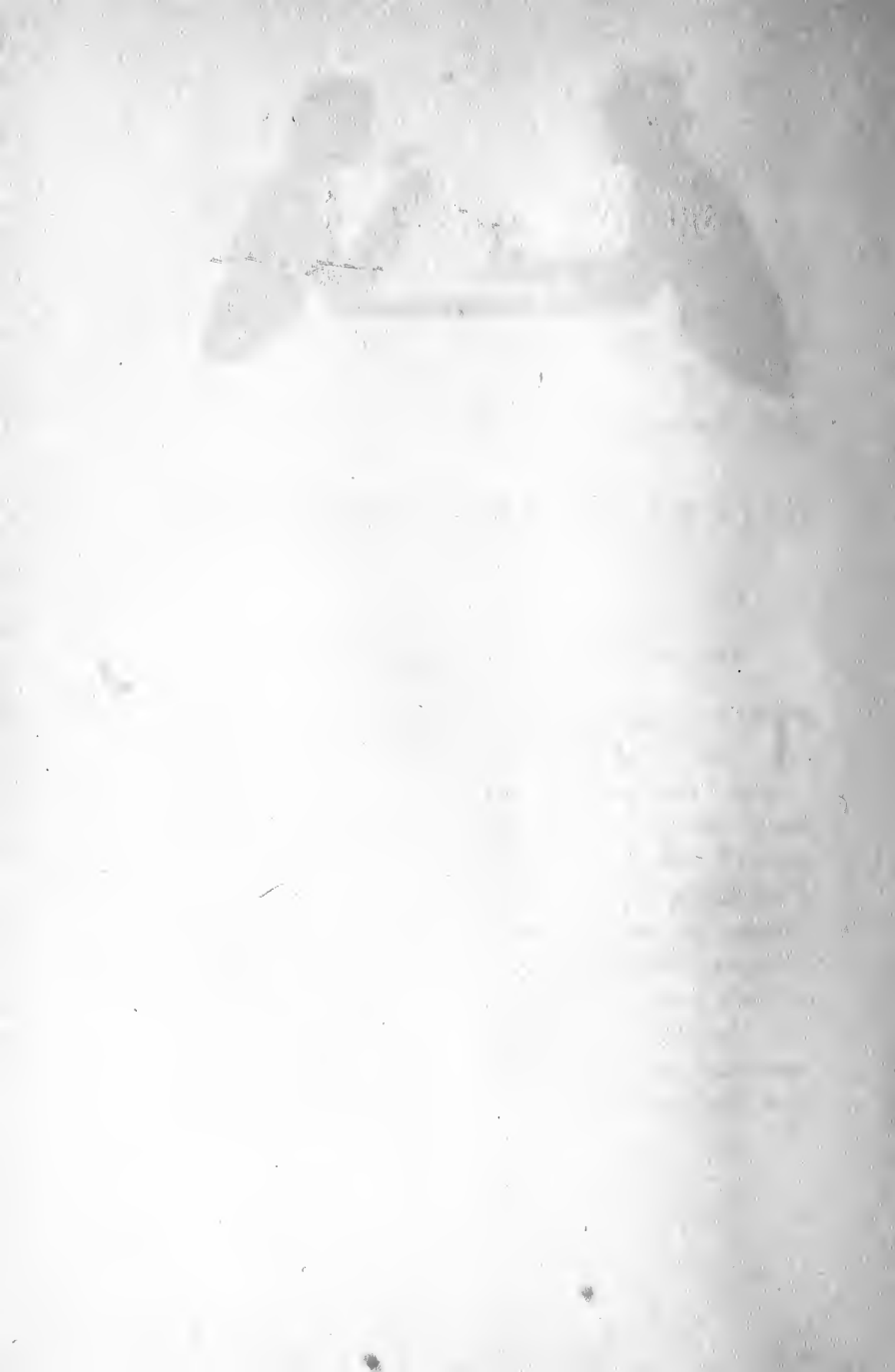


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BRITTANY WITH BERGÈRE





Deux Dubonnets.

BRITTANY WITH BERGERE

I

The Most Charming Man in the World

THE planning is usually the best part of a trip. That is what Decima — Decima is my sister — and I thought when we decided to spend a few weeks abroad. First came the question of the country; which finally reduced itself to France. Then there was the particular Province — for to attempt to see too much is to miss everything. Brittany triumphed over the “Château Country,” now worn almost to fragments by countless tourists and innumerable guidebooks; over Paris more American than French in the summer months; over the Gothic temptations of Normandy. Yet

why Brittany should have triumphed, *Le Bon Dieu* himself alone knew, for we certainly didn't; it could only have been a stroke of Genius.

Even with the definite region decided upon, the delightful planning was only just begun. Next came the problem of locomotion. Trains were far too prosaic for so romantic a trip; automobiles we despised as unworthy — though privately we knew that we couldn't have afforded one if we had wanted it: bicycles were the things! We would order them in Paris and have them sent to us at Boulogne and . . .

But here Genius made a bad play and nearly upset the whole game. Of course, one of us had to get ill and leave matters in the hands of the other, and, of course, the other did not like to take all the responsibility. So when we met on board the steamship *Friedrich Wilhelm*, all we knew was that we were bound for Boulogne, eventually for Brittany, and that the convalescent must not ride a bicycle.

Despair fell upon us. Cabins Nos. 102 and 104 were shrouded in gloom; we spoke in monosyllables. My meek suggestion that we emulate Stevenson by hiring a donkey and cart and drive around the whole coast of Brittany in three weeks was scornfully (and I see now, quite justly) scouted as absurd. I relapsed into mournful silence and regretted that I ever came. Then

Genius retrieved itself: we met The Most Charming Man in the World.

He was at one time president of the *Alliance Française* in New York, had been made a member of the *Légion d'Honneur* for his services to the French in that city, possessed an unlimited fund of information about Brittany and was perfectly delightful. He had never made, he said, such a trip as we were hoping to make and he doubted if we'd cover very much ground with a donkey; but, unless we minded a daily rain, a horse and carriage were perfectly feasible. Our sense of the romantic was a little shocked, but the practical in us seized the suggestion with avidity and asked countless questions. "You'd better start from Rennes," said The Most Charming Man in the World. "I'll give you a card to my friend Anatole Le Braz who lives there — I'm sure he'd be glad to help you. He's really a delightful fellow." Having just read "*Au Pays des Pardons*," the name of the author was as magic to our ears. Thus the voyage ended in happy expectation.

II

We Reach Rennes

PORTS are much the same the world over, and landing is an invariably tedious matter. Boulogne was no exception. A crowded ride on a tender (*un remorqueur!*) with the attendant struggle in a tiny office for railroad reservations; the usual absurd formula of a customs examination by an unruffled, handsomely uniformed official in the midst of a surging mob; and then an hour to wait in the little depot on the Quai Chanzy with nothing to absorb one's attention but a large station clock on whose smug face a painter was busily inscribing the numbers one to twenty-four. Everywhere vendors were endeavoring — and usually successfully — to entrap the unwary. We helped to swell the number by the purchase of a luscious looking little basket of cherries, at an exorbitant price. I explained the high cost to Decima as due to the comparatively small size of the country and purchased them with a grandiloquent air and a slight remuneration to the *commère* who sold them. Underneath the layer of fresh green leaves that supported the topmost berries we found — excelsior! And the old

woman had the impudence to come back later and insist I'd given her a Greek franc. The Most Charming Man in the World merely smiled at this example of French perfidy and said,

"That's not cheating, it's merely putting the best face on things." I fear he was prejudiced.

At last the whistle shrieked in the familiar high pitched tones and we bumped and rattled away from the sea, dotted with little brown-sailed fishing smacks. Away we went from the docks with their horde of grasping *commissionaires*, out past the main station, by countless box cars quaintly labeled according to their capacity for men or horses, followed by ragged urchins whining for "*un p'tit sou, M'sieu, un p'tit sou*," past all the hideous factories and brickyards of the suburbs of a commercial town. Then we slid quietly into the country.

And such a country! The wonderful smiling country, the land of gardens. The fields, a glorious mass of green and blue and red, broken by an occasional wooded patch, but usually every scrap of ground under cultivation — even the narrow strips beside the tracks flecked with little tents of new mown hay — and splashed with color from the hand of the Great Painter. Here and there a road, guarded by a double row of bending poplars stretches like a golden ribbon towards the rolling horizon. Everywhere flowers —

glowing poppies, dainty *bleuets*, daisies, tiny morning-glories clinging to the very rocks of the road-bed, and sometimes a dash of white water lilies on the surface of a calm pool. Now we pass a swamp surrounded with piles of peat, each carefully numbered. There is a man with a mess of fish — the first successful French angler I've ever seen. And everywhere, too, little villages — an American woman sitting next us wants to know why they are all called "*Buvette*"! — are scattered through the waving fields; the tiled roofs and red, yellow, and white stucco walls lending additional color to the charm of the whole.

There was a whistle, a glimpse of the magnificent cathedral, and the train came to a stop before the very important-sounding but unprepossessing "*Hôtel du Globe et d' Amiens.*" I hurried out, but The Most Charming Man in the World, who was in the next carriage, got to the pushcart before me and purchased the last bottle of beer. He was radiant at being released from German cooking and once more in his beloved France, and refused to speak a word of English. As we stepped into the train, he drew me into the vestibule at the end of one of the coaches and, dropping his voice to a delighted whisper, "*Il y a un 'clergyman' dans mon compartiment,*" he said — and offered me a glass of beer!

Paris consisted, for us, in driving from the



*Il y a un "clergyman"
dans mon comparti-
ment.*



Gare du Nord to our accustomed hotel, a welcome dinner and more welcome beds, and then off next morning for Rennes. The horrors of that journey are indescribable — nearly eight hours packed in a tightly closed compartment with six inhabitants of the country. Suffice it to say that the journey came, like most things, to an end, and we sank in exhausted heaps in our rooms at the Hôtel Moderne.

III

Introducing Bergère

TAKEN all in all, Rennes was a disappointment. Enjoyment of a place is, of course, largely a matter of moods, and ours, perhaps, was not as cheerful as it should have been. To be sure, we felt we had justification. In the first place, Rennes was too large, and this seemed very unreasonable of Rennes, as we'd been looking for something quite small and rural and Breton; instead of which we found quite naturally a town of seventy-five thousand inhabitants, filled with cafés, cars and cabs and typically French. Second, people stared at us in a most disconcerting manner. Third, when we called on M. Le Braz with our card of introduction and a mental list of questions relating to the hire and keep of horses, the youth who opened the door replied in perfect English to our carefully thought out but stumbling phrases that he had that day left for his vacation of three months. Or maybe it was only three weeks, but that being the whole time allotted for our trip, it mattered little if he were staying three years. Sadly we wended our way back to the hotel,—which was another grievance, for we hadn't

thought "*Madame*" was very nice to us because, contrary to what was to be expected of our nationality, we hadn't wanted the most expensive rooms in the house. We later repented most heartily of this particular prejudice, for she proved most obliging. Baedeker, that trademark of travelers, branding them with their crime on sight,— which we soon left in our disgust at his complete ignorance of such a spot as Hédé with its little Hôtel de l' Écu,— Baedeker mentioned hotels, cafés, tramways — both electric and steam,— post offices and American consular agents, cabs by the hour, by the course, even by night, but not a word as to the possibility of hiring a horse for several weeks and the approximate cost thereof — information which surely any competent guide should furnish! The American Consular Agent! Why not? The telephone elicited the answer: the gentleman was on his vacation,— at Dinard. Vacations seemed popular at this season; we wondered that the telephone was in operation. *Madame* kindly called Dinard for us, but our friend had taken a house without a telephone. We could have sat down and howled dismally. And here began our repentance concerning the hotel. *Madame* in five minutes called up a riding school for us, stated the requirements, received a satisfactory reply, made an engagement for us to call, even furnished us with a little map showing the

location of the Rue de Viarmes — and, metaphorically, we fell on her neck and wept.

The *École de Dressage et d'Équitation*, Rue de Viarmes, 11, we found without difficulty, and half of the firm of Thiriot et Blanchet — which half I don't know — in neat stock and other accouterments becoming a dealer in horse flesh, met us at the door and seemed to understand our speech to a certain extent. Then he led the way to a stable and showing us a nice-looking little brown mare, wrote "250 francs" on a nearby blackboard. I raised my eyebrows and stammered something about our having to pay for her keep, whereupon he plunged into a mathematical dissertation to prove that even so, it would be far cheaper than railroad fares. Finally he volunteered a reduction of twenty-five francs and we left, agreeing to the bargain on condition that the horse should go well on a trial the next afternoon. Thus did we become acquainted with Bergère. Privately she was dubbed "*Folies Bergères*," though Decima suggested that *we* were probably the *Folies*.

The Saturday market was just breaking up and the town seemed a little less modern as we sat on the *terrasse* of a small café and watched the peasant women drive by in their high two-wheeled carts, their heads covered with the Breton bonnet, which in this particular vicinity has a pair of strings — or, more accurately, side-whiskers —

that end in a broad bow resting in front of the chin. The young girl's coifs were merely tiny pieces of lace the size of a silver dollar. The somberness of perpetual black and the everlasting umbrella surprised us, but we soon grew accustomed to both and understood their "*raison d'être*,"— especially the umbrella!

IV

The Open Road

MONDAY arrived, ushered in by the dismal plashing of what seemed a small but determined cloud-burst. During the trial trip of the day before, M. Thiriot (or was it M. Blanchet?) had insisted on riding behind the little red-wheeled dog-cart, probably for the express purpose of awing Bergère with his too well known voice. Be that as it may, the little horse had shown so remarkable speed that we had engaged her on the spot and she was due to arrive at two-thirty. But our fresh linen had not come and packing was at a standstill. And then, of course, in the midst of this predicament, Decima's femininity had to crop out: she must have a new, appropriate, and becoming hat for the trip. It took two hours' steady paddling around the crooked streets to accomplish it, but success rewarded our efforts — or rather *her* efforts and my long-suffering patience — and, returning to our hotel just in time for *déjeuner*, we found that the laundry was still in abeyance. Lunch was over and the rain had miraculously stopped, but still no *blanchisseuse*. One-thirty, one-forty-five, two o'clock and she had

not appeared. Finally, in response to our third frantic message, the linen arrived and was thrown into the two suitcases, kit-bag, and small satchel which, with three kodaks, comprised our equipment. Then, having paid over to M. Thiriot two hundred and twenty-five francs, and having deposited Decima's original hat with *Madame* for safe keeping — *Madame* wore black so Decima felt fairly safe it would not decorate her person during our absence — and having tipped the *femme de chambre*, the waiter, the head waiter, the two hall porters, the driver of the hotel 'bus, the stable boy who was holding Bergère's head, and several nondescript individuals who stood around expectantly with an air of having accomplished a great deal, we climbed in, saw the luggage roped on behind and clattered off down the street followed by many "good-byes" and "good lucks" — the latter probably very skeptical.

No sooner gone than we made a number of discoveries, all of which tended to raise in our opinion the characteristic acumen, if not honesty, of our horse dealer. The harness was not the new and shiny one which we had used on Sunday, but harness which had seen evident hard service. The iron footrest — against which I, as driver, was entitled to brace my feet to prevent slipping completely off the sloping seat, was gone altogether — probably with a view to compelling us to buy a

new rest under the terms of our contract, which covered the loss of everything from the whip to the entire outfit of horse, cart, and harness. O wily Thiriot!

"Oh, well," said Decima, "we'll write and tell him that we know what he's done and that we think it was horrid, and that will make it all right." Which of course ended the matter.

As to Bergère, we couldn't complain: she was a darling and had a fascinating way of wagging her little stump of a tail in harmony with her pace. True, even in spite of considerable "tapping" on occasion, she never attained the speed which she had developed so easily with half the firm of *Thiriot et Blanchet* aboard. Although I am entirely ignorant of the wiles of their nefarious trade, I fear she must have been given some sort of an equine cocktail before that trial to make her so lively. Still, from the very first she proved a cheerful, plodding, uncomplaining little mouse, and we grew exceedingly fond of her — not that she appreciated or reciprocated our affection. I call her "mouse" advisedly; she resembled one much more nearly than a horse. The term originated with Decima — as, indeed, did all ideas on the journey; I couldn't think of any and Bergère wouldn't.

In our disgust at the base perfidy of *Thiriot et Blanchet*, we lost our way. At the outset, Hédé

had been our goal — with the vague idea, I believe, that we should thus eventually arrive at Saint-Malo. But some miles from Rennes, when we complacently fancied ourselves half way to Hédé, we discovered that we were not on the *route nationale* leading to that place, but were on quite a different road going in quite a different direction to quite a different town — Montauban.

“What shall we do?” I asked with masculine interrogation.

“Do, Peter?” echoed Decima with feminine inconsequence, “why do anything? What difference does it make where we spend the night anyhow? Let’s try this little road here,” pointing to our automobile map and striking what afterward proved to be the right one. So off we turned to the right by a little lane that pattered aimlessly along, just as do the delightful little French rivers, now shut in by rows of close growing trees, now wandering between golden fields, crimson studded with poppies. The peace and quiet of it all stole into jaded American souls like magic. All cares and troubles seemed to slide from our shoulders as in reality the waterproof covering we had bought in the morning nearly slipped from the backs of the luggage. And then the spell was broken. Rounding a corner we found ourselves on the Saint-Malo road, headed for Hédé, a steam tram shrieking and growling in the distance. It

did not bother us to any great degree — indeed this was the only time that we actually saw one of the little trains. But the sense of civilization from the crossing of our path by car tracks was an irritant from which we never could quite escape: the thing — or its counterpart — was ubiquitous and kept turning up unexpectedly in a disconcerting manner.

A few kilometers beyond Montgermont we felt obliged to stop and photograph with two separate kodaks a delightful old gate which opened direct from the highway into a chicken covered barnyard. The beaming owner declared that it was from three to four hundred years old — which I can well believe — that “but yes, many *Anglais* had photographed it, that there had even been made post-cards of it, and wouldn’t we please give him one of ours?” We promised,—promises are easily made,—but completely forgot to ask the gentleman’s name; all we knew was that his house was labeled “*Registre Bureau*” and that the tramway station — that infernal tramway again! — across the road was labeled La Brosse-La Chapelle. Fortunately our honor was saved by neither of the pictures coming out.

To this inhabitant of the country we were *Anglais*, and so we remained throughout the next three weeks,—usually, I fear, with the mental prefix “mad.” We didn’t bother to correct the

general misapprehension, for we felt that we might as well spare our fellow-countrymen the reputation for insanity. The one time we did attempt to explain that we were not British, our companion had never heard of America, so we gracefully accepted our foster-nationality.

On, on past laughing fields and rich, green trees, past workmen asleep by the roadside, past staring children that smiled and said "*bonjour*" and staring grown-ups that didn't smile and didn't say "*bonjour*," past a loathsome beggar who tried to talk to us toothlessly and rained down thanks and blessings on us for our two sous, on, on past the little lanes that wound off so temptingly in every direction, past the gleaming black-and-white *pies*, the poppies, the countless roadside flowers of every description, and then a spire in the distance announced Hédé.

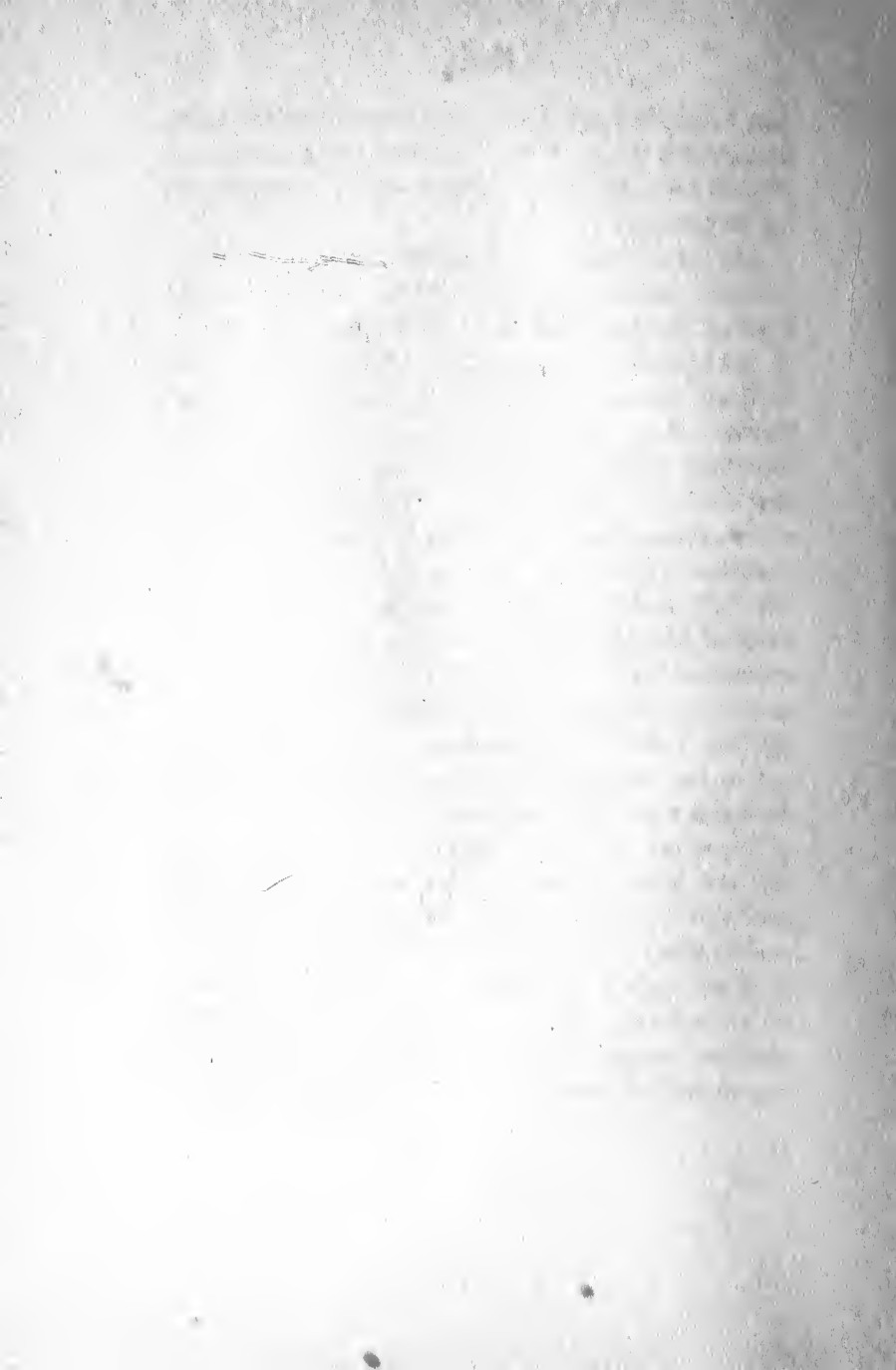
V

Hédé

OUR preconceived notions, based on memories of Rennes, were of an up-to-date, commercial and quite uninteresting town, with street cars and people that turned and stared. And when, on asking an old gentleman if there were an inn there, he informed us with a polite but surprised raising of the eyebrows that there were three hotels, our fears were redoubled. Our delight therefore was extreme when, trotting over the cobblestones of a narrow lane, we found ourselves in a peaceful, deserted square, at the door of a tiny old house designated by a tin sign as the Hôtel de l'Écu. I dislike making inquiries in French, so I remain in my seat, ostensibly to hold our prancing steed in check while Decima descends in search of someone. The first door led into a tobacco shop and *comptoir*, containing a number of men busily drinking, but with no one in charge; the second opened into a queer little dining-room,—and Decima beat a hurried retreat. While she stood in the road, nonplused, and looked up at me, equally at a loss, a rosy-cheeked girl ran out. Smilingly she assured us



Mam'selle at Hédé.



that we could have dinner and rooms for the night, though the house scarcely looked large enough to possess two *chambres*. Then a man emerged and led Bergère away.

The quaintness, the simplicity of those rooms! — mine especially, tucked under the eaves and reached by two flights of winding, worn stairs. A high bed — immaculately clean and covered with an enormous, enveloping canopy — a rough washstand, a table and one chair were all the furniture which each could boast — or hold, for that matter. And the nondescript but delightful room which acted as “lobby,” tobacco-shop and *comptoir* with its low, heavily raftered ceiling, and the little stools around the sticky tables! In the days of the Duchesse Anne, whose house it was, the whole lower floor had been one great hall; but modern partitions made a small dining-room and kitchen besides the *comptoir*. Later, on the way out to the stable, we saw the huge fire-place, now deserted for a more convenient stove.

Then, as the sun dropped slowly to the west and the silent shadows began to steal from their cool hiding places, we crossed the little square and in three minutes found ourselves on the crest of a grassy hill, surrounded with the ruined walls of a mediæval castle. Sheep browsed in a business-like manner here and there, but all the rest of the everyday, matter-of-fact, eating-and-drinking

world seemed to have slipped mysteriously away, leaving us alone with the Spirit of the Past to conjure up pictures of Henry II and his sturdy Englishmen storming this Breton stronghold. Out through one of the gaps in the crumbling walls — possibly made in that very year 1168 — far at our feet spread a wonderful valley interlaced with the slender, silver ribbons of a dozen different roads. And to think it made no difference which we should take on the morrow! Surely there is a bit of the nomad in most of us. For which let us be thankful.

A distant bell chimed seven and we turned regretfully and wound our way through walled lanes to the inn — and dinner. And what a dinner! Truly one of the most excellent and welcome repasts I have ever eaten. Epicures may say that Brittany is not noted for its cooking; doubtless they know. All I know is that alone and at peace in the little dining-room, with the smiling, rosy-cheeked girl to wait on us, and a simple but delicious dinner, our souls — and our appetites — were content. Soup — “*la bonne soupe au chou*” — omelet, lamb and potatoes, and fruit, with unlimited *vin ordinaire*, and excellent cider to boot — what more could two hungry, healthy trekkers want? And to think that Baedeker doesn't even mention Hédé in the index!

Dinner over, we went into the *comptoir*, and I

smoked while Decima wrote and probably half the male inhabitants of the village came in for coffee or wine or to play cards by the light of one smoky swinging lamp. One of the said inhabitants tried to kiss the pretty little red-cheeked girl and got his ears boxed for his pains. Then we went out to say good-night to Bergère, passing through the court with its tower which we climbed the next morning. She seemed quite content — not that we would have known had she been starving — so we picked our way back over the rough stone flagging to the house and mounted, each with a candle, to our nooks under the eaves.

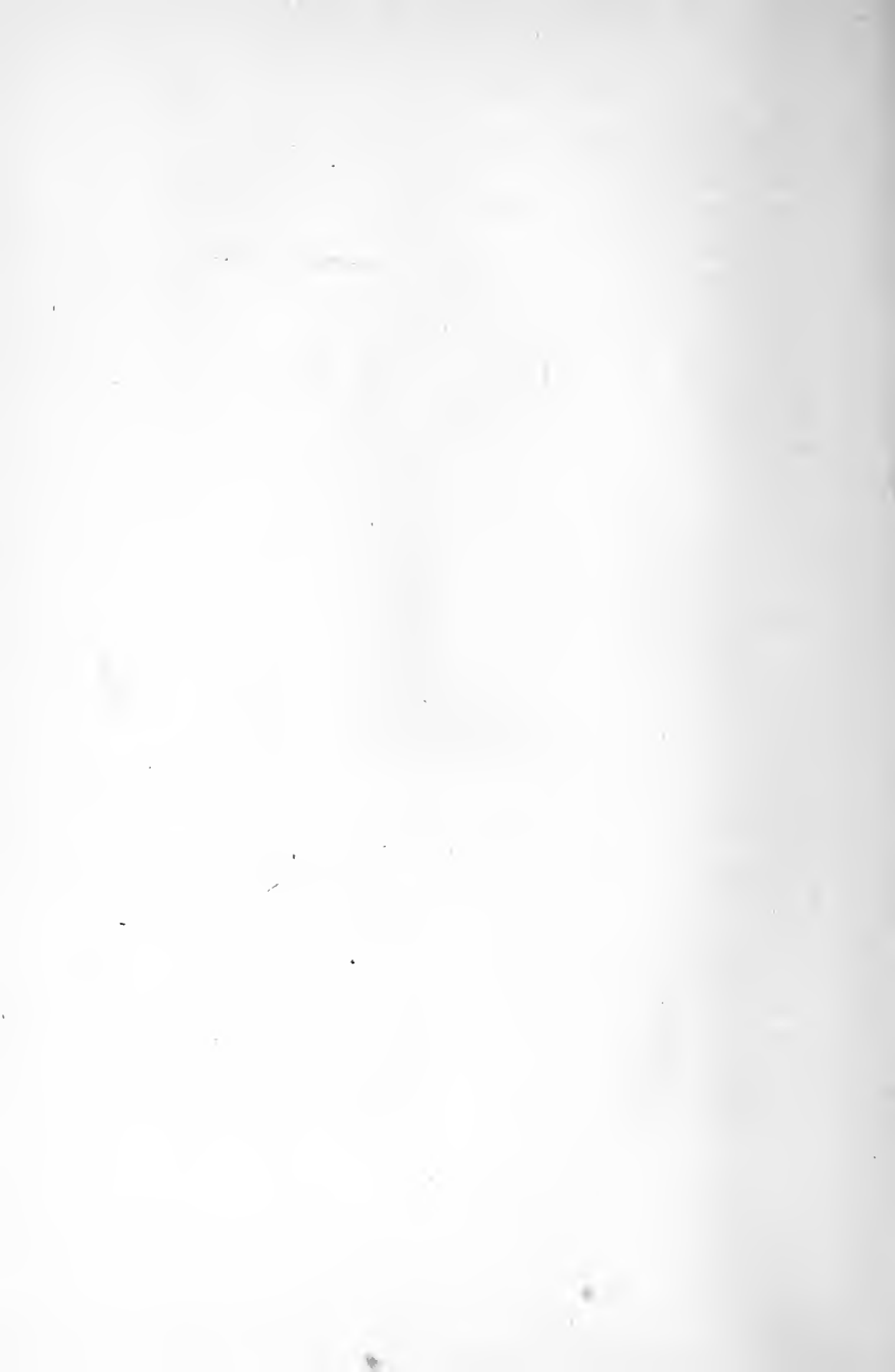
Awakened by the vociferous creaking of the village pump, I dismounted from my dangerously high bed to find the sky a leaden gray, veiled by the stream of rain that rolled down from the steep roof. The busy little town seemed unmindful of the weather. In the middle of the square was the rosy-cheeked girl pumping the day's water supply for the house — though it seemed an unnecessary labor, considering the bucketfuls which the heavens so gratuitously sent. Silent men, their black *blouses* drenched with rain, drove by in cumbersome high-wheeled carts; women bearing cotton umbrellas clattered their *sabots* over the cobbled streets. Breakfast finished, the rain had ceased and we sallied forth through the *comptoir*, packed with farmers drinking hard cider out of teacups,

to find the cause of so much activity. We found it: in what was once the forecourt of the castle a pig market was already in process of disbandment. Instead of sheltering the dark deeds of proud lords and mighty men-at-arms, the château must need content itself with frowning on so prosaic an event as the sale of a few swine! Such is the mutability of human affairs.

But its plebeian surroundings could not change the wealth of romance in the calm ruins. Further exploration discovered for us a most charming view back toward the town which revealed a fact we had not noticed on the preceding day — namely, that a great part of the village was suspended on the crest of a hill down whose sides sprawled many quaint gardens, resembling a diminutive Babylon. Skirting the fringe of walls, we walked to the other side of the square and to the church, twelfth century Romanesque with a twentieth century spire, two months old. The interior was a shock to one's sense of structural stability: a Gothic roof, new, shiny, scrupulously white, with all the outward and visible signs of diagonal, transverse and longitudinal ribs, hung above our heads without apparent support. The town pride which preferred this painful spruceness was pardonable; the grotesque incongruity of interior and exterior, though financially surprising, was conceivable. But how in the name of gods



*A peculiarly unbeautiful
infant.*



and architects was the feat physically possible? Long we puzzled over the enigma without finding a solution. Then suddenly I had an inspiration. Looking furtively about, I retired to one end of the empty church and stood on a pew. Poking the low vaulted roof with my cane, there was an ominous crunching sound, and a shower of plaster descended. We escaped, guilty but triumphant; the riddle, both financial and architectural, had been solved! However, we did not deem it wise to linger in order to confess our discovery to the priest, but walked briskly back to the inn and commanded the horse. While Bergère was being harnessed, the baby of the household was waked to have its photograph taken. The fond mother of course insisted on changing grimy but characteristic garb for festal attire, which spoiled the value of the photograph except as a record of a peculiarly unbeautiful infant. Then with real regret at parting, and what this time seemed really sincere good wishes, we turned the little horse and clattered off on the road to Combourg. Why Combourg, we didn't exactly know; except that we had to go somewhere, and the rosy-cheeked girl had said there was an interesting château there. Traveling "from hand to mouth," so to speak, added a gypsy flavor to our journey which made for far greater charm than a carefully followed itinerary.

VI

The First Menhir

COMBOURG,—how picturesque the great towers of the Château Chateaubriand dominating the surrounding country! We saw it first in the distance from the top of a long hill, framed between rows of receding trees, impressive in its silent dignity, haughty in its feudalism. Then, as we descended the hill and could distinguish the village nestling secure and confiding at its feet, it seemed to lose its asperity and take on a paternal quality mingled with the gentleness of age, like some grand old man grown tender through the experience of a long life of struggle. Clinging to its base was the “Hôtel du Château et des Voyageurs, Aristide Allix, Propriétaire.” The name seemed applicable, the owner sounded conscientious, the hour of noon was appropriate. We stopped for lunch. If the great Aristides himself had been an inn-keeper, his sense of justice could not have furnished a more delicious repast. It was four years since I had tasted the *rillettes* for which Touraine should be justly immortal if for nothing else, and here was the counterpart of that delightful potted meat. The years

of memory were not in vain; they had taught me wisdom and the sad fact that dishes are not always passed a second time. So my first portion was, I fear, unspeakably large. My hopes were amply justified. What seemed an enormity of appetite to Decima was, fortunately, not regarded as a breach of etiquette by the *demoiselle* who served us, accustomed as she was to the astounding table manners of the French *commis voyageur*. So when occasion offered, I brazenly ventured to take a second helping and asked if these were not the famous *rillettes de Tours*. She stared in surprise and shrugged her Gallic shoulders. "But no, M'sieu," she said in an injured tone, "they are the *rillettes de Combourg!*"

Luncheon achieved, we sat down at one of the two little iron tables which, with a faded awning, adorned the *terrasse* of the establishment. While Decima wrote the inevitable postcard I smoked and asked questions. The *château* was "very ancient and 'très, très intéressant' and, name of a name, it is necessary absolutely that Monsieur and Madame see the skeleton of the cat which was really a count of Combourg who haunted the castle." But when we came down to actual facts, it seemed that the *château* was open only on Wednesdays, and this was not a Wednesday. The cook, however, who overheard the conversation, emerged from her sacred precinct to say that

the *concierge* had married the uncle of her husband and that we should have no trouble if we essayed the matter properly. A word to the wise for once sufficed. So we shouldered our kodaks and followed the winding street up to the gate-keeper's lodge.

The *concierge* may have been the aunt by marriage of a very capable and pleasant mistress of the culinary art, but she scarcely seemed to live up to her relationship-in-law; in fact she was quite unwilling to oblige. However, we attempted the implied remedy — with success; she being no less hardened than the average member of her calling to the monstrous sin of bribery. The iron gates swung open and we entered the château grounds.

Full of charm was this park, with its paths cut through cool sward bordered by rustling boskets of mighty trees. In its midst rose the gray walls of the castle, silent, imposing, eloquent of another age. Our guide said little until we had entered the ground floor of the building, with its freshened appearance bespeaking modern occupancy. Then she burst into a perfect torrent of incomprehensible, toothless *patois*. It was the monologue delivered on such occasions, as familiar to the good soul as a priest's Aves, but to the uninitiated, utterly unintelligible and ludicrously funny in the sing-song delivery. The old lady seemed very ill at ease, and whisked us from one room to another

until we had scarcely a breath left in our bodies, from the sheer exhaustion of climbing winding stone stairs and scurrying along the deserted corridors. Still we saw it all, this early home of Chateaubriand, dating in its oldest part from the twelfth century, where he spent the long, silent evenings he has so vividly described. Just as we reached the door, an ill favored youth came hastily up and whispered a message to the old dame. Whereupon a look of terror overspread her wrinkled face and she scuttled off without even pausing for a *pour-boire*, delivering a mumbled order over her shoulder to the aforesaid youth. That worthy told us to follow him and led the way rapidly through the front door towards a different gate from that of our entry, bidding us keep under cover of a gentle slope. Already the old woman was hurrying as fast as her feet could take her towards the main entrance. In answer to repeated questions, the youth grudgingly informed us that M. le Comte had returned unexpectedly from Paris and was already at the gate and that if he had found us in the grounds he would have been highly angry. "So you had better dispatch yourselves," he added sourly in the idiom, as he banged the gate behind us. We returned to the hostelry of M. Allix, avoided the polite cook and started off for nowhere in particular.

Bergère was unhappy; her apology for a tail

did not wag with its accustomed jauntiness. I am not naturally of a cruel nature, still I would have tried the rod. But the gentle taps which were all that Decima would allow would have roused scorn in a wayward kitten. So I was obliged to decide something was wrong with the adjustment of the *charrette*. We came to a halt, and while Decima fed the absurd scrap of a horse with grass and soothed her with baby-talk, I toiled in the blazing sun to shift the seat and lighten the weight on Bergère's back. Still no visible change in the pony's mien; she crawled along as if we had been maltreating her for weeks.

"Perhaps we've got it too far back and it's interfering with her digestive apparatus," suggested Decima.

Another shift: no result.

"Well," said Decima in an authoritative tone, "we'll simply have to stop at the next town and let the horse go to bed."

I dutifully looked up the next town on the map.

"It's called Bazouges-la-Pérouse," I said; "we really can't spend the night in a place called Bazouges."

My objection was overruled, and a few minutes later I stopped in the one narrow street of Bazouges-la-Pérouse and asked this time for "the hotel." "Here it is," answered an exceptionally unkempt man. "I am the *propriétaire*; what will

Monsieur and Madame have? ”

Looking up we discovered a very unattractive inn; could we have two rooms for the night? The *hôtelier* answered in great surprise that he had one room and in yet greater astonishment at such a question that there was only one bed in it. So I thanked him and drove off, leaving him gaping after us and explaining the “mad English” to his friends and acquaintances.

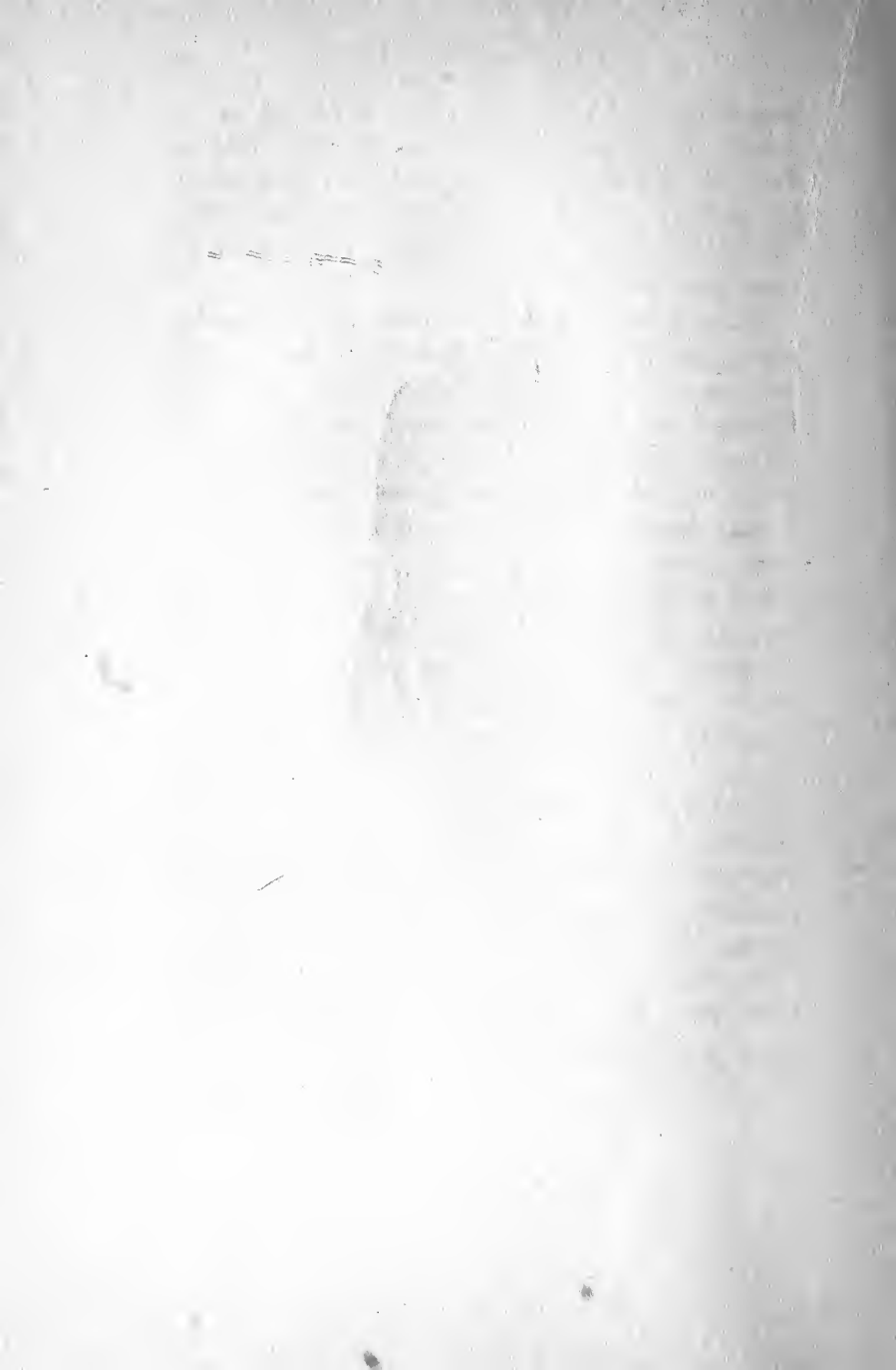
Antrain, which Decima insisted must be a misnomer for “*en voiture*,” was but nine kilometers further on, but Bergère was too depressed to make rapid progress. A short distance out of Bazouges we saw our first menhir,—one of those giant monolithic monuments of uncertain origin which are so striking a feature of parts of Brittany. It would seem that these monuments were first raised by the prehistoric peoples preceding the Celts; but many date from Gallic, even Roman times. This was in no way an unusual specimen, standing merely some ten feet high by the roadside,—it would probably be more accurate to say that the road had originally gone out of its way to pass the megalith—but to our unaccustomed eyes, it was a treasure, a discovery of the most amazing importance. The relentless grip of the church had put its mark even on so pagan an idol; perched on the top was a small stone cross; probably the work of an early saint, intended to banish

the evil influence of the accursed stone, or, what is even more likely, to adapt the relic to his own peculiar form of worship. Yet one might well believe in either saints or devils, to see a great rock casually planted in this manner where it would be hard to find a stone the size of one's head. Six little boys returning from school with six little umbrellas under their arms seemed suddenly stricken dumb when asked how it happened to be there. A seventh, when taunted with the old chestnut that the cat had stolen his tongue, plucked up courage sufficient to tell us that his name was Joseph Leroux and that he was aged six years and three months; but as to the menhir, he seemed in amazing ignorance, which only tended to increase our self-complacency at the discovery we had made.

Whether or not Bergère has archæological tastes, I am unable to say; maybe she was merely superstitious, knew of the approaching menhir and was relieved to have done with it. In any event she was greatly cheered when she left it outlined against the glow of the afternoon sun, and trotted quite happily on. And how glad we were that lack of hotel accommodation had dissuaded us from Bazouges, as we rumbled over the cobbled, winding streets of Antrain — another town omitted by Baedeker! How quaint the old houses, how different the frank curiosity of these



Joseph Leroux.



simple villagers from the boorish staring we received at Rennes! And the Grand' Maison Boscher, though not so ancient as the little inn at Hédé, was even more charming than the Hôtel de l'Écu — built round a stone court, its walls covered with climbing roses.

A sympathetic stableman listened to my stammered recital of Bergère's woes with the courtesy and apparent comprehension which only the French can show a harassed foreigner. He seemed to take a real interest in the little horse — as, indeed, did all with whom she came in contact — and finally announced he would give her a bath with *savon noir*. As this was said with an air which implied that of course I knew black soap was the very finest treatment which could be applied for just this particular ailment, I nodded wisely, murmured "*bien*," and settled myself to watch the proceedings in the court-yard of the Grand' Maison. Having seen her carefully rubbed and put to bed, we strolled over to the old church. It was too dim to see much more than that the interior had been quite inartistically remodeled. So we wandered back by the ivy-grown prison, long since disused, and played "Canfield" after dinner by the light of a solitary lamp until the outrageously late hour of nine-thirty and then — retired.

VII

Le Mont Saint-Michel

THE busy country day was already well advanced when I woke from the dreamless sleep to which the Breton air and a clear conscience are so conducive. For a moment I lay still, lulled by the fragrance of roses framing the window. Then, suddenly conscious of many things yet to be seen in this delightful Brittany, I tumbled to my feet and beat frantically on the wall until a sleepy voice assured me that Decima shared my sentiments. Details we discussed at our "little breakfast" of bread hacked from an enormous, pachydermatous loaf, with glistening butter, washed down by a bowl of coffee. The *Wanderlust* was on us; we had seen all of importance in Antrain: we must press on to new discoveries even more important than the menhir of yesterday. Where we should go mattered little, but Pontorson seemed the natural place, being on the direct route to that most historic site in all Bretagne — Le Mont Saint-Michel.

Decisions are easily made when one has only to consult the wishes of a sister and a small French horse. Yet this one had like to bring us into a deal

of trouble. As we entered the town some two hours later, the inevitable pig-market was in session, and the streets were thronged with pig-laden and pig-driving peasants. The scene was full of fascination and, as Bergère was crawling at the snail's pace she loved so well, we paid little heed to the course, trusting her to look out for herself. To the mere man who attempts to calculate what the feminine mind will or will not do is sure confusion. We were engrossed in listening to the heart-rending squeals which emerged from a potato-sack on the back of a purchaser, when an absent-minded *paysanne*, with stooping shoulders and silvered hair beneath the neat cap, walked directly in front of Bergère. A masculine horse would have stopped, or at least swerved to let the lady pass. Not so Bergère. We were startled by a slight jolt as her soft nose came suddenly in contact with the old woman's ear. A thrill of horror passed through me. Had she chosen, it might have been a "bad quarter of an hour" for the mad English who drove so abominably. But here again my analysis of the feminine mind was wrong; she merely clapped her hand to her head and scurried off, murmuring "*Mon Di'u, mon Di'u!*" without so much as a glance at us.

The Hôtel de l'Ouest seemed far too civilized with its electric light, but we later found a candle more satisfactory for reading. Our companions

at luncheon were, however, too barbaric for words; never have I listened to sounds so stertorous during the consumption of food by man or beast,—an East Side tough would have been a Chesterfield by comparison. Yet these same drummers, if asked a question, would have answered with formal politeness of which most Americans would have been incapable. Manners are a matter of geography, I suppose, as much as language and the wearing of beards.

Mont Saint-Michel, we were told, was no place to take a horse. Luncheon over, we boarded the steam tram, leaving Bergère to her fragrant hay. The diminutive train rattled off through the country, suddenly grown flat, and soon the smell of the sea filled the air. A bend in the tracks and there loomed in the distance the rock, fortress-girt, and crowned with the thirteenth century abbey, topped by the dwindling church spire — a giant menhir reared above the monotonous *Grève*. Then we slid onto the dike which joins the mainland to the town, perched as Le Mont is half a mile out on the sands. A few minutes later, the train disgorged us — almost the only foreigners — at the base of the cragged promontory. A great avalanche of guides, *commissionaires*, and hotel agents descended upon us. Once, however, we had fought and glared our way through their ranks to the main gate of the fortifications, the



A pig in a poke.



host seemed to respect our temerity and we were, comparatively speaking, unmolested. Doubtless this turbulent and not over-clean crowd earn a respectable living from the unwary, but why they are permitted to afflict the intelligent and unobtrusive traveler and to desecrate the charm of so historic a spot, passes the bounds of my comprehension. However, I am not the French Government.

Charming Mont Saint-Michel assuredly is. Far abler writers have told of it; and its appearance and history need here no word. To attempt a description of its charm, its uniqueness, its magnificent setting, would be futile; to me they are indescribable. Our formal tour through the monastery with half a hundred French sight-seers was spoiled by a dozen brats who seemed to think that *we* were the sights they had come to see. They blocked our way and, with uncouth staring, got under our very feet. Hints that their attentions were unpleasant had no more effect than the roars of a caged lion. But having accomplished our duty and soothed our consciences as tourists with the thought that we had seen all that should be seen, we sneaked off really to enjoy Mont Saint-Michel. An hour or more we wandered over the fortifications, looking now at the busy, crooked, almost perpendicular streets of the little town within, now over the wet gray *sables* to the gray water without — for the tide recedes some

seven miles from this Bay of Saint-Michel. We stopped for rest and refreshment at one of the many cafés, the *terrasses* of which line the walls with yellow iron tables and chairs. For sight-seeing is fatiguing and to prolong it uncomfortably is to spoil the entire day with weariness. Decima chose tea which, being intended for foreigners, was execrable; my *bock* was more successful. Mère Poulard's "famous omelets" we suspected were now in the hands of a corporation and to be avoided. Then as the sun swung lower and the chill of evening began to drift in from the sea, we wound our way down hill and over sticky sands to the train. And thence back to Pontorson.

That evening there was music by a handful of buglers attached to a division of soldiers in temporary garrison in the town. As music it struck me as rather limited but it gave enormous pleasure to the inhabitants. Beginning at one end of the main street, the band would march to the other, playing vociferously a monotonous *fanfare*, while the entire population followed at its heels to applaud at the finish. A rest followed, the musicians all lighting cigarettes and conversing indolently with the bystanders. Then followed a second tune, as monotonous as the first, with puffs of smoke between blows on the bugles. Again the whole procession would retire to the other end of the street and the performance would be re-

peated, using the same two tunes. The stableman said something about a march to Hédé, but after following the crowd over the same route five times, we gave up all hope and went to bed.

The church we visited in the morning while Bergère was being clad for the day's march. The exterior was Romanesque, simple but quaint, with stumpy bell-turrets flanking the façade. The tympanum of the south portal was rudely carved with grotesque figures, too worn to be recognizable, but resembling a bird and a man. The interior itself was uninterestingly modernized. But under a window on the north side of the church was a bas-relief of the Ascension, apparently taken from the north tympanum, where was only a plain slab of stone; and to one side of the altar was a stone reredos. The figures were so mutilated — all had been beheaded — that we could recognize only two scenes of the twenty plaques, the central "Crucifixion" and the "Last Supper." So poor was the preservation that any attempt to date the work was precarious. But it was probably of the Renaissance. The south portal was, however, undoubtedly executed by Romanesque sculptors.

The drive from Pontorson towards Dol was magnificent in scenery but slow as to speed. Her "*écorchures légères*" — as M. Thiriot (or was it M. Blanchet?) had called two wounds on her flanks, — seemed to bother Bergère, and she inter-

fered somewhat. One o'clock found us still four or five kilometers from our destination. So with trepidation, but immense curiosity, we stopped in the hamlet of Baguer-Pican at our first roadside *auberge*, designated as an inn by the conventional bunch of mistletoe over the door and a rambling sign, "Café Lambert." What a delightful name, Baguer-Pican! And to think that, in the United States, it would probably have been Jonestown or Smithville! The voice which answered our shouted request for food sounded rather gruff as it replied that there were only eggs to be had. But what a cheerful reception from the old lady, apple-cheeked and smiling, when we entered! She was dressed in rusty black and her head was neatly covered with a colored handkerchief — to keep her cap fresh, she apologized. A drunken old fellow was seated in the *estaminet*, so she ushered us into the family living- and bed-room and went to prepare our luncheon. At last we were in a real Breton house, old but scrupulously clean, down to its hard-packed earthen floor. The huge clock, three portly beds with spotless linen, stiff canopies and enormous feather beds, the pig-shaped *broche*, in which meat could be cooked on a spit, the sacred gim-cracks,— everything, in fact, was full of charm, and we hugged ourselves in glee and in private.

Then the door opened and the girl-of-all-work,



La fille de Mère Lambert.



flushed from the fire and laughing happily, brought in the lunch. They must have loved us at first sight, for beside the promised omelet, there were soup, fresh sausage, and peas to be eaten with great pewter spoons, accompanied by hard-crust bread and slices from a dome of golden butter. Simple, to be sure, but all of the freshest and best, and given as generously as though we were honored guests. Brittany is one of the few places in a sordid world where people seem to take real pleasure in service graciously performed, in giving of their best and in seeing this best appreciated. Peas were followed by the sensible French dessert of fresh fruit; but the good old soul, for our special delectation, had dug out of Heaven only knows where a dish of motheaten cakes. To refuse them would have been ungracious, but we welcomed the coffee afterwards. To this latter, the young girl who waited on us and acted as advisor on Breton etiquette — 'twas she who had explained that the bread was to be eaten with the peas — insisted that we add "*fine*" (meaning, of course, in the vernacular, *fine champagne*). Then, to delight my masculine taste, she produced a bottle of treacly curaçoa, which I was obliged still further to add to the coffee. All of which was laid on a solid foundation of excellent cider,— for we had had no sip of water since leaving Rennes, and Brittany is a thirsty country!

After dinner we took the family's photograph, in which, at Mère Lambert's whispered request, the farmer and his wife were included—"So faithful they've been, M'sieu, for twenty years, and it would give them such pleasure."

Happiness is seldom long separated from pain; pleasure goes hand in hand with pathos. The old lady was showing us her vegetable garden with the pride of ownership; contentment was written on her simple face, until I told her we would send her the photographs if they came out well. She gave a hurried, scared look which at the time I did not understand. Then she answered in a strained voice that "we were all that there is of kind," and the subject dropped. The smile vanished from her lips and she spoke in monosyllables. Finally, at the end of a noticeable pause, she asked with averted face, "Do they cost very much, the photographs?" Then we knew, and when we explained that they were gifts she beamed once more. The poor old woman had thought us peddlers, and her fear of a few centimes' expense was but the dread of the very poor of useless outlay. It was a lesson never to be forgotten.

One reads in books of such expressions as "*Dame*" and "*sacré nom de Dieu*," but to me at least they had always sounded artificial. Yet here was this innocent old woman punctuating every sentence with the name of Our Lady and



*Do they cost very much,
the photographs?*



using oaths which, in English, would have crisped even my indifferent hair with horror. Again a matter of geography.

On arriving at Dol we asked a cavalry officer as to hotels and he suggested *Au Buffet de la Gare*. This sounded prosaic, so we relied on our own initiative — later regretted — and engaged rooms at the *Hôtel Grand' Maison*. No sooner had we entered than a shower fell, but as in half an hour the sky was smiling as if nothing had happened, we went in search of the great *Menhir du Champ-Dolent*, which lies about a mile out of the town. When nearby, we asked directions of a woman pushing a cart of cherries. The information she gave gladly, and also a handful of her fruit and a detailed account of an automobile accident that had occurred on the very spot where we were standing, with the dramatic climax that one of the injured had died in her arms. The little girl helping to push the cart offered to guide us; I suppose we looked harmless, for the mother consented and departed on her way to Dol. Oblivious of all property rights, the child led us through the ripe wheat, relating the while at lightning speed how the stone had been dropped by the devil, who got too old to carry it — or maybe it was the stone which got too old to be carried; these French pronouns are so confusing — and explaining, too, that she had on her old

shoes because she had to climb the cherry-tree, adding that she was eleven years old and had a month's vacation from school, and why did *Madame* wear such a funny hat?

If the other menhir had been interesting, this was amazing. Thirty feet high it stood, with a circumference nearly as great, and it is asserted that it extends over twenty feet into the ground. The presence of this vast stone cigar in the midst of a boulderless region was inexplicable; I would even have been satisfied with Marie's explanation — could I have understood it. The wooden crucifix which crowned it in all the photographs was gone, leaving the monolith in its original, druidical appearance, except for the golden fields which surrounded its drab base.

The same band we had heard at Pontorson — or its twin-brother — appeared on our return to Dol, and with it a considerable battery of blue-clad artillery. Horses were being shod all over the sidewalks, and the *petits soldats* seemed to swarm from every house. Decima offered the practical suggestion that they were probably on the way to the maneuvers of the Fête Nationale. As this reminded me that the present day was the "glorious Fourth," I immediately haled her to a café for a "safe and sane" celebration and a silent toast to our flag. So much for *our* maneuvers.

The Grand' Maison was not a success. On

estampe les gens là, for they charged us first class prices for second class rooms and third class food. I regretted our contempt of the cavalryman's advice. *Madame* was civilly impertinent and obviously unwashed. Further, a young drummer who spoke some English — the first specimen since we left Paris, and mightily welcome it was, for all its cockney accent and its "Oh, I zay!", "Oh, vera nize, awvully pleazant,"—insisted after dinner on sketching out the rest of our trip, giving me the names of commercial hotels where we could be very comfortable if we came *de sa part*. Bogrand was his name, and he would have killed our little horse with the day's marches of forty or fifty miles coolly mapped out for us. And, as might be expected, his idea of an interesting place was a modern summer resort with casino and *plage*. Bed-time finally brought relief.

The town was quite old in parts, with mediæval *maisons à porche*; and the cathedral, Gothic, with sculptured portico of *Sainte Magloire*, would have charmed us had it been in Hédé or Antrain or even Baguer-Pican. But the thought of the unkempt, shifty-eyed woman at the hotel hardened our hearts against magic of the past, and we drove away without regret, after a walk round the old ramparts. To such an extent does one's bodily comfort interfere with one's æsthetic appreciation!

VIII

The Gray Sea and a Calm Stream

THERE are two roads from Dol to Saint-Malo; one directly to the northwest, the other, the *route nationale*, strikes northward through the Marais de Dol to the Channel and then skirts the Baie de Cancale for a matter of six or eight miles. We chose the more circuitous, and soon the smell of the sea filled our nostrils once more. The stiff sea breeze whipping at Bergère's mane made a lap-robe very welcome as we turned and drove quietly within a few rods of the damp sands that reached out to the low tide. Mile after mile stretched the unbroken *sables*, only a distant murmuring betraying the presence of the "far-resounding sea" itself. At intervals along the roadside, white-armed windmills moved silently. And here and there fishers' hamlets crowded close to the smooth road.

At one of these villages, St. Benoît des Ondes, we stopped for luncheon; Decima could not resist the temptation of the name. The Café des Voyageurs was only across the street from high water mark; but when we arrived, the sea was already two miles out and still rapidly receding! It was

an unpretentious establishment, sandwiched between a butcher's and a baker's, and boasted no *loge à cheval*; so Bergère was tied to a ring in the wall, and a deaf old man brought her a feeding trough, in which all the chickens of the vicinity promptly roosted. We, also, had lunch on the sidewalk, and the tablecloth, likewise, had nearly to be tied to the wall to keep it from blowing away. After the meal, in hopes of getting a photograph of the fishermen at work, we walked out to sea until the little inn was almost lost to sight and Bergère was merely a brown speck in the hazy distance. But nary fisher did we see, nor anything that resembled an ocean, and we turned back in disgust, our boots covered with wet clay.

As we stood before the door of the café chatting with our bonneted hostess, there was the guttural blast of an automobile; and a moment later who should glide by over the perfect French road but The Most Charming Man in the World! He gave a casual glance in our direction, but no sign of recognition crossed his face. I can scarcely blame him: stylish we certainly were not. Decima was clad in homespun, with the little white hat that Marie had thought so funny pulled down about her ears; I in Scotch tweed, innocent of pressing since we left Paris, and, being my one suit, destined not to be pressed until our return to

trunks in the capital. A disreputable felt hat clung tenaciously to my head, and a budding mustache was at its most unattractive stage. Both of us were covered with dust accumulated since morning, and our sunburnt skin was peeling from crimson noses. No, there was no feeling of bitterness in our hearts that he should fail to recognize us; only a great pity for him and for all other travelers who can — and consequently do — travel by motor and miss the simple joy of the open road, the association with the people, the quiet contentment of Hédé or Antrain — or St. Benoît des Ondes. As for us, we reveled in our simplicity; to hire a horse, to provide for that same horse; to house ourselves comfortably and sleep again the sleep of childhood; to live on the fat of the fair land — to do this, and at the same time to see and touch intimately the life of a foreign country, all at an expense of fifteen francs a day — who would not glory in it? And whenever we had to pay more than a franc and a half for the best room in the house, such a hotel merited displeasure as unwarrantedly raising the daily cost of living — and we would seek elsewhere. And the “elsewhere” usually served better food more agreeably than the more pretentious hostelry. Nor was the least blessing of smaller inns the relief from the worry and annoyance of tipping half a dozen worthless domestics at the end of a brief

stay. Yet this rule and its average we deemed it safer to waive in larger towns — and even so we often regretted it.

Bergère looked enormously fat after dinner — and small wonder, seeing that they always gave her the same rations as their draught-horses; but she seemed very happy and marched very well to Saint-Malo, a town with little attraction for us. Probably we were wrong, for our guide book said it was “*une des villes les plus fréquentées de la France.*” But this was the very reason we did not like it; for a place where “*accourent en été une foule de baigneurs et de touristes*” was not exactly what we were in search of, M. Bogrand to the contrary. The ramparts were of course captivating, with a view over the water, now turned opalescent in the rays of an afternoon sun. The cathedral, too, was an interesting mixture of styles, the nave looking as though formed of two churches placed end to end. The oldest portions were twelfth century Romanesque, but the greater part was flamboyant Gothic.

True to the rule's exception already mentioned, we felt obliged to go to a large hotel in this metropolis of twelve thousand inhabitants. (I may admit, also, that the thought of a hot bath was irresistible.) It was the Hôtel de l'Univers, new and shiny, and had it been in fact what it claimed to be in name, we could not have felt more

out of place in our travel-stained clothing under the supercilious gaze of the female at the office and her supercilious satellites. We slunk away to a little café for dinner, and from a corner watched the "*foule de touristes*" pass and repass like the colors in a kaleidoscope. I had never expected to rejoice in Americans, as such, in a foreign country; but after a week of nothing but French we beamed on two fellow-countrymen passing in the street, and strained our ears to hear some words of English — if only American English!

At Saint-Malo I learned that environment influences another matter beside etiquette and the relative profanity of certain words — that is to say, curiosity. I could hardly have conceived a more sober, unassuming attire than ours; dusty we may have looked, but dirt is international. Yet we were stared at as though we were pterodactyls. But a long-haired creature in peg-top corduroy trousers and velveteen jacket, leading a fox by a string, seemed to excite not the slightest interest in the most rustic observer. He was French and one of them; we were foreigners, outcasts, axiomatically queer. But if for nothing else, I shall remember Saint Malo for the joy of that bath, a hot bath, un *grand bain*, — O, *la la!*

Early the next morning we climbed into our cart, all the servants of the hotel watching with

ill-concealed scorn, and rattled happily to the dock whence ran the little steamers to Dinard. We found, too late to change our plans, that Bergère was terrified at the rocking boat, the strange noises, the smell of oil and hot metal. After tipping every human being within sight, we finally got her unharnessed, and harnessed once more at Dinard. Then, without so much as a glance at this famous resort, we breathed a sigh of relief and struck into the real country again, by secluded roads meandering beside the Rance, hemmed in now and then by the stone walls of a village street. Our lunch at Miniac was spoiled by the sight of a drunken brute — I hope he was drunk — beating a horse on the nose with a club while trying to harness him, and telling all the neighbors and the priest who tried to interfere how "*méchant*" the horse was. Yet the people as a rule seem gentle enough with their animals. When the great carts pulled by tandems of two, three, or even four magnificent stallions would creak and groan up and down the hills, guided only by the voice and the deep, throaty "B-r-r-r-r-r," there was often a volley of good-humored cursing, and invariably a salvo of snaps from the long rawhides that sounded like pistol shots; but never once did I see the lash touch the patient brutes. In fact, even the snapping did not bother them a whit; nor was it meant to, for the driver was just as

likely to crack his whip when stopping as when starting. The sonorous rolling sound used to direct these workhorses struck my fancy at first hearing and, after a morning's practice, I thought to try it on Bergère. I flattered myself proficient; but we nearly ran over a dog in consequence, and I was obliged to give it up. Just so had we been unable to make her understand the conventional English parlance in the matter of driving. She was eminently French and eminently feminine.

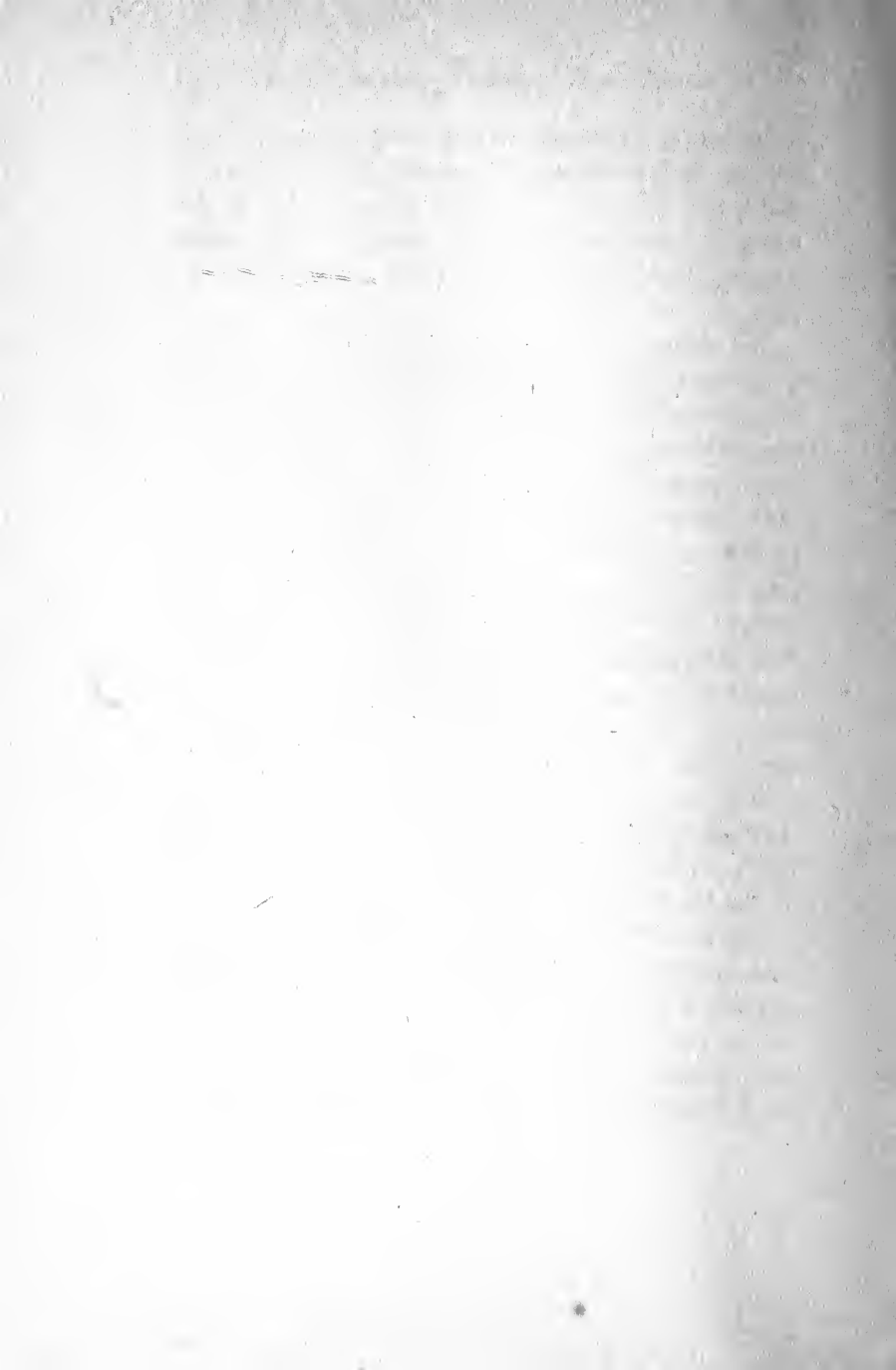
As we drove on again, past a peasant tanging his bees, heavy clouds gathered and we had the first rain while on the road, a fine record considering the cheerful prognostications of *The Most Charming Man in the World*. And even at that, it did not really rain till we reached the fascinating town of Dinan. But in our haste to avoid a drenching, we broke our rule and went to the first hotel we could find.

The Hôtel de Bretagne was nice enough, to be sure, but still a real hotel with electric lights and an office, and as such, our only source of regret in Dinan.

Some words are as magic, empowered to conjure up potent memories — of a pungent smell, of twilight reflected in a rippled pond, of strains of haunting music. Such a word for me is Dinan; its very mention seems to draw the mist of Time from my eyes, leaving me in an enchanted land



*But no — she had not
visited the town —
the hill was too
steep.*



of crooked, climbing streets, and houses of forgotten centuries straggling down to the banks of the placid Rance. We had dreaded Dinan because it sounded so much like the fashionable Dinard; but truly the resemblance goes no further.

No sooner were we inextricably settled in our quarters at the largest hotel than the rain ceased and we set out to prowl, with the ultimate intention of dining at a small restaurant by the water's edge, spied as we drove into town. The Grande-Rue led us past the church of Saint-Malo, late Gothic and almost entirely reconstructed, to the gate of the Couvent des Cordeliers, charmingly sculptured. Then, turning into the precipitous Rue du Jerzual, we plunged down the hill. The street was lined with houses, still inhabited, the majority of them dating from the sixteenth century; but at least one antedated Columbus' well-known transatlantic voyage. Down, down through the Porte Jerzual into the Rue du Petit-Fort, and at last we found our little café, close by the Gothic bridge that spans the stream.

There, by the side of the Rance, with its boats tied up for the night, almost under shadow of the soaring Viaduc de Lanvallay, we seated ourselves in the calm Breton twilight and enjoyed the dinner of our lives. Everything was perfect of its kind, but the *haricots verts* were divine. And the

vin de Bergerac was better than any champagne — though perhaps this was due to our mental association of one Cyrano, fighter, poet, and perfect lover. A pretty young girl waited upon us; she was Monsieur Robert's niece (Robert being the proprietor) on a visit from the South, she told us; but no, she had not visited the town — the hill was too steep! How long had she been in Dinan? Oh, only a matter of fifteen days! After Decima had surreptitiously fed all the starving cats and dogs in the neighborhood, and after Angélique had wished us a smiling *au revoir*, in answer to a promise to return on the morrow, we crossed the old bridge and passed back over the viaduct to the dimly lighted town above.

The next morning we sought the Château of the Duchesse Anne of Brittany, passing on the way a statue of the ubiquitous Du Guesclin. It was a fortress of the fourteenth century, with moss clinging to the cracks in its grim keep, and it might have been full of interest could we have wandered at will. But to be dragged by a bored *concierge* through a heterogeneous collection of junk called a *musée* — stuff ranging in dusty disorder all the way from Greek vases to photographs of the façade of the cathedral of Amiens — was dully monotonous. Aside from the heavily vaulted rooms of the château itself, the only object of interest was the original works of the



*All the starving cats
and dogs.*

horloge of Dinan, made in 1498.

A stroll round the walls brought us to the Tour Sainte-Catherine, which commands a magnificent view of the valley of the Rance. Thence we scrambled down to the river and, having ordered lunch at *our* café (for we felt a pioneer's pride of discovery), we set out to take a few pictures of the city, from the top of the hill down which we had driven on our arrival. But the day was warm and the slope was steep, and I soon relapsed into ease under a tree while Decima's artistic proclivities led her to the top of the hill and back.

As we sat by the water-side, lingering after luncheon, the Sunday crowds streamed by. Whole families sauntered past, bound nowhere, doing nothing, but enjoying the holiday and each other in the lovable way of France. The peasants with wrinkled, tanned faces, the women folk old for their years, their shoulders bowed with work no woman should perform; bare-legged and booted boys of fourteen; shy, curious girls — all in unaccustomed finery — they seemed truly a happy throng. Soon the "sportsmen" appeared in absurd costumes, and several ill-assorted crews disappeared precariously down the river. Then with a farewell snapshot of Angélique, and with many *au revoirs* and *adieux*, we set forth to climb the Rue du Jerzual.

The Église Saint-Sauveur in its older parts was

more ancient than the church of Saint-Malo near the hotel; but it was the usual extraordinary mixture of interesting Romanesque and flamboyant Gothic. The old part of the façade was noteworthy for its sculpture; but the most interesting thing in the church — indeed, in almost the whole of this quaint town — was a granite block in the north transept. On it was carved in sprawling, ill-formed Gothic characters the following inscription:

Gy: gilt: le: rueur: de
 millire: bertran: du: gueaquin
 en: son: viuant: constable: de
 trêce: qui: trespassa: le: xiii^e
 Jour: de: iullet: lan: mil: iii^e
 iii^e dont: son: corps: repose
 auerques: ceulx: des: Roys
 a: saint: denis: en: France:

Beneath was the Constable's coat-of-arms, an eagle with double head and outspread wings. The stone was supposed to contain the heart of the

warrior. What a tribute to a brave man — “whose body lies with those of the kings at St. Denis in France.” Those few simple words told a story more eloquent than volumes of panegyrics.

Turning, then, from this dignity, the tawdriness of the surroundings struck home with redoubled force. Next to the monument was an altar to Notre Dame de Bon Secours; in place of mediæval severity, here was only modern tinsel. The china statues seemed to speak a shallow pretense; even the long “candles” were imitation to within a few inches of the top. I do not criticise; the earnestness, the faith, the reverence, which inspired it all was too real; but there was pathos in the very cheapness that spoke so eloquently of biting poverty blindly seeking salvation in a tin placard inscribed “*Merci.*” And everywhere *troncs*, to squeeze, for this saint or that, the hard-earned *sous* from a tired peasant woman. Doubtless no price is too great for contentment of soul; but why must it be bartered for the pennies of simple, ignorant folk? How can men reconcile the ministry of God with trafficking in the ignorance and superstition of untutored peasants? The picture rose before my mind of a French-Canadian village in the Province of Quebec, the home of poor but religious people; in the midst of unpainted houses rose a great cathedral, for all its tin roof, built by the labor of a parish that

could ill afford so unproductive a task. But not content with that, the priest taxed every family a yearly pew-rent of a hundred dollars, which drove many in desperation from the Church and from the town. Has history meant nothing; will Rome never learn?

IX

We Meet a Nut-Cracker

THE next morning dawned with lust of travel strong upon us; Dinan, with all its charm, could hold us no longer — we were Alexanders with innumerable worlds to conquer in a fortnight. Bergère, when consulted, wagged her appendage in approval. So the pilgrimage recommenced, and we turned again toward the north.

The road had lost nothing of fascination. Hour after hour slipped by, one mile joined another in the ever-changing distance, and still the simple scenes never palled. Here a new flower to add to our collection under the driver's seat; there a photograph to be taken — always with a reward to Bergère's patience in the form of a handful of grass. Each inn meant a chat with the country people over a cup of cider, the news perhaps of the crops, or how far we had come, or our destination — it mattered little what. And everywhere peace and contentment.

Certain parts of Brittany are noted for the native costumes. We had chosen not to visit these parts, so I should not complain. Yet in a country full of beautiful coloring, the perpetual black

worn by men, women, and children seemed strangely out of place. To be sure, it is cheapest and many could afford nothing else; for them I have only respect. But it is of bourgeois nature to skimp. Perhaps I ought not to use so hard a word; for it is certainly thrift which has made the nation what it is. But the wrangling, the haggling over a few sous on every occasion grows distinctly tiresome.

Here my philosophizing was interrupted by an untimely break in the second-rate harness which M. Thiriot had bestowed upon us. A town was near, Ploubalay by name; and here we spent the night. We stopped at a rose-covered inn on the outskirts and asked for rooms. The landlady seemed immeasurably surprised at our request and said she had no rooms. Are some *auberges* intended solely for "*vend à manger*"? If so, by what subtle distinction in the withered mistletoe over the door is one to divine the fact? But the Hôtel des Voyageurs, our lady continued politely, could give us very comfortable accommodation. So we turned regretfully away, as though foreknowing our dissatisfaction.

Comfortable it was, but no more could be said for it. The "help" seemed astounded at our appearance, and we were obliged to carry our luggage from the cart ourselves, while *Madame*, who was out, took so long to return that we spent

the greater part of the afternoon waiting for her. The stableman was the redeeming feature of her establishment, showing rare intelligence in attending to the repair of our harness and in ministering to Bergère's wants.

But it was not so much the hotel as the town itself that was at fault. In spite of its Celtic name, which surely should have brought forth something of interest — "plou," meaning "place of" though what "balay" connotes I do not know — there was nothing to be seen except a sign warning motorists of the desirability of "*Attention aux Enfants.*" So we strolled beyond the municipal confines, an operation requiring not more than two minutes, and lost ourselves in grassy lanes, with no sounds to disturb the evening calm other than those of many birds, and the chime of a far-off bell.

The hotel dinner was surprisingly good, considering the general unattractiveness of the appointments; but the table manners of the guests were of the porcine quality found at Pontorson — only worse, if possible. The varying scale of noises that arose from the table, especially during the soup, would have been farcical if it had not been revolting. And, *mirabile dictu*, these were not the lowest strata of society by any means, but burghers of the middle class; indeed, several times I was present when small farmers were tak-

ing their dinner in their own homes, and the contrast was all in the farmers' favor. However, there was certainly a material advantage in the musical method of eating — a great bowl of steaming cabbage soup could be made to vanish while silent consumers had made no appreciable headway.

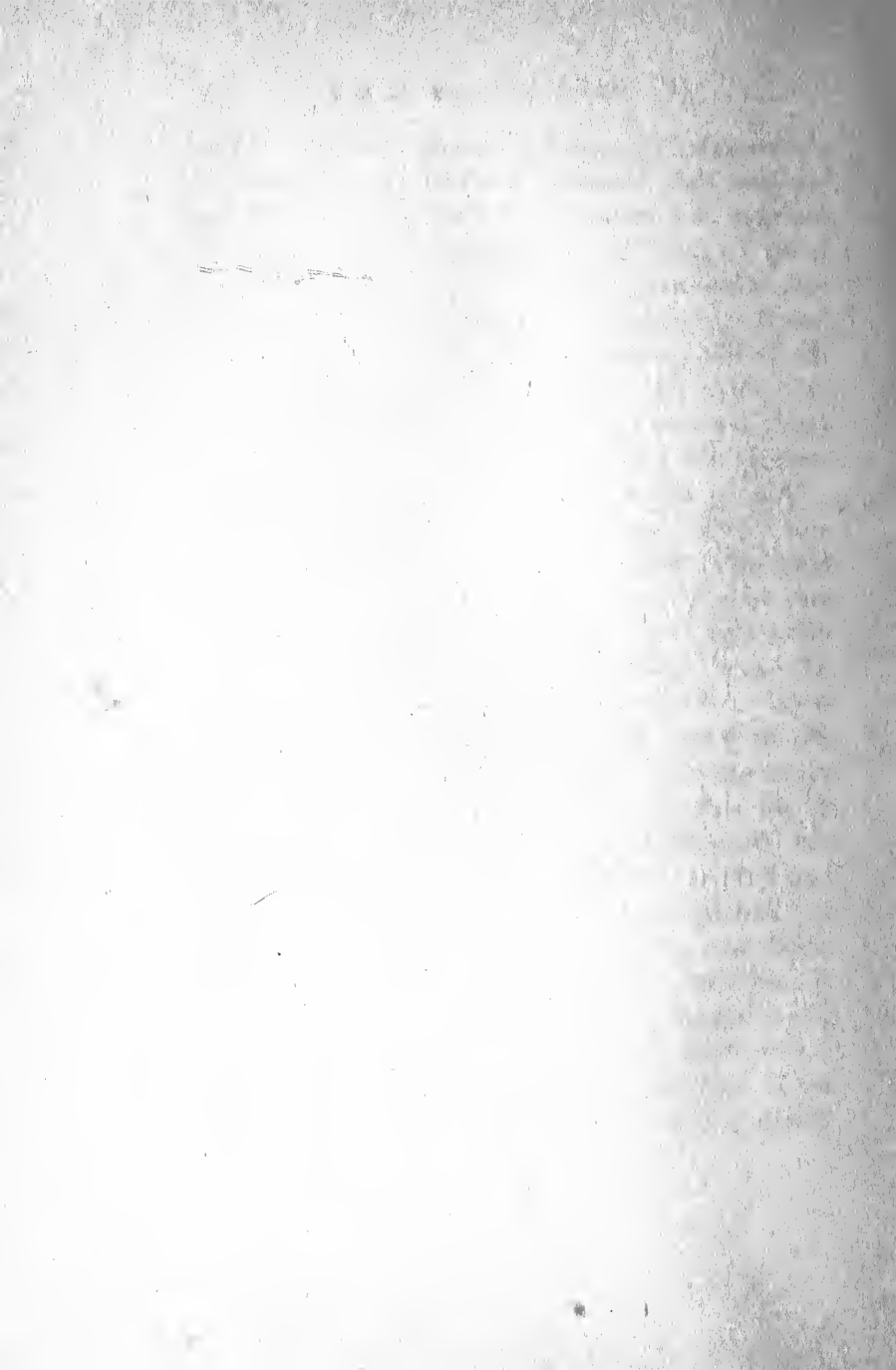
(N. B. Ploubalay, by the way, was a town which the drummer at Dol had characterized as "awvully nize"!)

The weather next day was warm but delicious, and the little horse seemed anxious to travel; so when we found Plancoët merely a second Ploubalay, we pushed on farther in search of lunch. An inn outside the town suited our taste, but apparently we did not suit the inn's, for *Madame* said sourly that she had nothing to give us, and sent us half an hour beyond to Pleuven.

And lucky we were that she did! Not only did the *Veuve Lefeuve* furnish us an excellent repast, with superior cider — *cidre bouché*, bubbling at fifty centimes a bottle like the best champagne — but she led us across the sunny street to the cool garden which she warned us now contained nothing but vegetables. Very pretty it proved, filled with many roses and strawberries and other plants not usually classed as vegetables. At sight of which we would invariably exclaim, "*Mais, Madame, ce n'est pas un légume!*" whereupon



*The awful deed
was accomplished*



she chuckled in a most gratifying manner. After we had duly admired the little plot, tended so lovingly, we crossed again to the inn. Our request to take her photograph delighted the old lady enormously. But she was stricken with fear lest the neighbors should see, so we stole back to the walled garden and locked the door behind us. And after the awful deed was accomplished, she fairly doubled up with glee at the thought of how cleverly she had outwitted them.

Among the many things she related was the story of the nearby Château de la Hunaudaye, built in 1378 by a certain Pierre de Tournemine, and long since partially destroyed. "But it is necessary that you see the ruins, *M'sieu et Madame*," she added, "for they are very beautiful." We needed little urging and soon reached the inn which she had described as the jumping-off place where we must leave the car. Tying Bergère to the wall, we disappeared into the outskirts of the Forêt de la Hunaudaye. Madame Lefeuvre had intimated that the road was not good enough for driving; and it was well we took the hint — which was a mild statement of the case — for we should assuredly have killed Bergère and ourselves to boot, in the first half mile. It was merely a rude trail through the woods, with great ruts worn into the hard-baked mud by the sturdy wheels of peasant-wagons — ruts which would

have snapped Bergère's tiny legs like match-sticks. Here and there was a thatched cottage, the ridge-pole lined with growing grasses. Once we passed several clustered in a hamlet with its communal bread-oven by the road-side. On we toiled over the road which grew every minute more abominable, until we were in danger of drowning in the water collected in the ravine into which the lane had gradually sunk, as is the wont of neglected highways. The sun beat mercilessly on our tweed-clad backs, until we felt that the "*deux petits kilomètres*" of our informant had been measured with seven league boots. We were all but ready to give up from sheer exhaustion when — we arrived. But the hour of toil was well spent.

Five towers marked the corners of the once mighty fortress and château. Worn, shattered, covered with the ivy of centuries, they still had much of power and arrogance, with the charm of partial ruin and of silence. A sense of unspoken awe fell upon us as we entered the yawning portal, through whose idle slots the chains of a drawbridge had once passed. We found ourselves in the grass-grown court; everywhere gaps in the useless walls, fast decaying and covered with a natural tapestry of green, spoke of an age gone never to return.

Before us was all that remained of the grand

staircase — a few stone steps, beautifully carved in Renaissance style, now leading nowhere. For all superstructure was wanting except in one of the towers where wound a precarious stairway, giving dizzy glimpses into the hollow shell whose carved fireplaces clung to the walls many feet above the ground.

The fascination of the place sank into our souls and held us as though enchanted. Here was no droning guide to break the spell. Long we wandered in the vast enclosure, until the lengthening shadows bade us hurry. Then we passed through the silent gate once more and descended into the moat, overgrown with trees, bracken and heather, and up again to the edge of a swampy pool where frogs were croaking rustily. Here a woman was pounding with a rock a mass of clothes soaked in the filthy water, under the misguided notion that she was acting *en blanchisseuse*. She told us the story of the château all over again, adding that it was very old — “older even than I am, M’sieu,” — and cackled sardonically at her grim jest. We left her still “washing” and struggled back over the villainous road until finally we reached Bergère, placidly regarding the wall to which she was hitched.

Although it was not yet six o’clock, the small farmer and his wife (who kept the tavern to eke out a slender income) were already at their

simple evening meal. It was pleasant to rest in the cool cottage and talk to them, as we refreshed ourselves with cups of golden cider. Our delight was immense at finding the man of the house a real "nut-cracker"—such was Decima's appellation for the old-fashioned peasant, derived from a small *casse-noisette* bought in Saint-Malo, and carved in the shape of a typical Breton of the old school. He was a quiet, well-built fellow with a steady gaze and the "mutton-chop" whiskers already *démodés* with the Gallicizing of Brittany. And his resemblance to the little wooden figure in this instance justified Decima's sobriquet.

Bergère traveled at her best pace after the enforced rest. The road passed first through the "Forest" of La Hunaudaye and then slipped into characteristic French farm-land, intensively cultivated and taking on additional beauty from its evident usefulness. In comparison with the miles of timber-land in certain of our western states, the term forest applied to a few hundred acres of carefully cut woods strikes one as humorous. Gradually, however, a change, unsensed at first, stole over the landscape. The houses became more scattered; here and there was an untilled field. Suddenly we found ourselves driving through an uninhabited, barren moor. One could not explain it; it seemed hard to realize that there could be any land in France where there would



*Another nutcracker, by
the way!*



not be an attempt, at any rate, to make something grow. Was the place haunted, accursed? The utter dreariness, the intense loneliness — not a human being was in sight — a faint chill that seemed to have settled about us, all lent too much color to the supposition. Profoundly I regretted so ridiculous a thought — yes, it *must* be ridiculous. I tried to whistle. The result was not melodious. I glanced at Decima; she appeared rather distrait. “Don’t be a fool,” I admonished myself angrily, and vented my spleen on our little Bergère, with the result that in another ten minutes we were once more in human country. Then I turned to Decima: “Beastly, wasn’t it?” I asked. “Yes,” she answered with a little shiver; then with feminine logic, “but you needn’t have spanked Bergère *quite* so hard, need you?”

Out of loyalty to the sex, Bergère took that moment to go lame, thereby proving my unnecessary cruelty. So she limped ostentatiously through La Poterie — a village appropriately given up to the making of earthenware; and it was only as the lights were beginning to twinkle in the windows that we reached Lamballe. Here the stableman (another nut-cracker, by the way!) declared there was nothing the matter with her whatever; and I went to bed amply justified — at least in my own masculine mind.

X

Moncontour

FOR ten days we had searched for a Pardon in vain — the nearest seemed always scheduled for a date which would find us back in America. But we had never despaired, and the question recurred over coffee and rolls. Our gracious hostess had wished us good-morning and asked if there were anything we desired. Our reply was that we should be absolutely happy if she would tell us where we could see one of the religious ceremonies for which Brittany is famed. "But that is easy," she answered. "The *Pardon de Saint-Amateur* takes place here in four days — next Sunday." She went on to tell us how, Sunday being the fourteenth of July, the civil and religious fêtes would be combined, and showered voluble information on us in regard to decoration and the fireworks that would honor the occasion. Which latter interested us not a whit. But our joy was so great at having actually tracked a Pardon to its lair, that we made no effort to check the kindly dame but heard her to the end, gloating silently. To think that we should see *un vrai Pardon!* It was perfectly true that it was not an

important one; probably there would be no peculiarly Breton costume; possibly it would be spoiled by combination with the French fourth-of-July — no matter, it would be a Pardon.

But a change was necessary in our plans. We could not afford four days in Lamballe; we must go elsewhere and return. *Madame* suggested that we visit Moncontour. I am still grateful for the advice. So we spent the rest of the morning exploring Lamballe, with the intention of leaving after luncheon. The Église Saint-Jean was not of interest, except for its bas-relief of St. Martin which the guide claimed was of the eighth century, though it looks too excellent for a period so early, or so late, as you will. But Notre-Dame, built partially on the site of a mediæval castle which had topped a sharp hill by the town, was quite feudal in appearance, with its great square tower rising like the keep of a staunch fortress. Indeed, as originally consecrated in 1220 by St. Guillaume Pinchon, Bishop of St. Briec, it had been but the chapel of the château of Lamballe. We climbed the summit-tower — why do tourists always insist on getting to the top of everything? — by means of a stairway which wound tortuously inside a pier, and were not disappointed; the view over the surrounding plains was glorious.

Bergère pretended at first a sore foot. But

when she saw that I was adamant, she relinquished her limp with a resigned air, and trotted happily along through a country growing ever more beautiful as we approached the rolling hills to the westward. About five o'clock Moncontour loomed up, a village perched on the top of a hill and some of it spilling over the declivity. We loved it from the moment we saw its Gothic-Renaissance-Spanish church in the distance, hovering above fragments of old fortifications.

The tiny Hôtel du Commerce was a gem; had it not been for the inevitable glamour of anything royal, even the "Shield" at Hédé, for all the Duchesse Anne, must have been eclipsed. Its squat, two-and-a-half story front faced the village square within a few paces of the façade of the Église Saint-Mathurin. A very short, very rotund old lady, half-blind, greeted us courteously and told us the best rooms in the house were at our disposal for a franc and a half each. Then she called "Marie!" and a frail girl with a sweet smile and a pitiful, hunched back came forward and would have carried our heaviest valise upstairs. Again the Veuve Launay raised her voice, and Georges appeared with a "*Bonjour, M'sieu et 'dame,*" and unharnessed Bergère. This completed, what was our amazement to see him lead her in at the front door! Though in reality, it was into a sort of vestibule, whence led a passage

through the house to the isolated little stable behind. My room, small in proportion to the rest of the house, was on the third floor — there were three stories in the back,— and overlooked the little yard, where I could see Bergère being dutifully scrubbed till her brown coat gleamed and her fat flanks swelled in self-satisfied fashion. Small as she was, she looked quite out of scale in the Lilliputian court-yard, where was scarcely room for her to turn.

There was still some time before dinner, and we descended through the kitchen, its walls lined with a dazzling array of burnished copper pans and kettles. As we ended up again at the inn an hour later, there was a load of aromatic hay piled in the street before the front door. Georges was perspiringly engaged in hoisting it up to the attic! The children of the village — bare-legged boys and curly-haired girls, the happiest youngsters we had yet seen — were rolling in the fragrant grass and scattering it far and wide. At first Georges treated the matter humorously and chased them good-naturedly away. But, like children big and little the world over, they did not know when to stop, and in exasperation he finally growled out a “*sacrrrré nom de Di’u*” and made after them with a rawhide. I expected to see a crowd of parents called to the rescue; but the children took their punishment in good part and the

last of the hay disappeared through the attic window without further interruption.

I have tried to say as little as possible about the Breton cooking, lest I might give the impression that I am a gourmand. France is the one country in which eating is apotheosized for me from routine into ritual. Further, were I to omit mention of this particular dinner, I should be guilty of breaking my word. For when I told the Veuve Launay it was the best meal I had ever eaten, she answered with simple eagerness — "You're not just saying that to flatter me, *M'sieu*? Then you will give me a good recommendation?" Therefore I repeat my assertion: it was the most savory dinner I have ever digested, bar none. Again we were alone with only the poor cripple to wait on us. She looked as if she had never had a square meal in her overworked, underfed life. But she smiled happily, as though to see us appreciate the dinner were her greatest joy. Soup, the tenderest of chickens, the most delectable veal — though it took Decima half an hour to convince me that it was not lamb — with fried potatoes such as would have delighted the soul of Lucullus, an amazing custard, and the biggest, sweetest raspberries ever beheld. And all this punctuated with cups of wonderful saffron nectar known in common parlance as cider.

Driving into the town, we had remarked a lit-

tle café in the original Flat Iron Building — a quaint house, built on a triangular plot of ground, about two feet wide at the narrow end. Dinner over, we retraced our steps, ostensibly for du-bonnet. When we arrived at the tiny hostelry we found a pretty, tired-looking woman and a drunken man, who we feared was her husband until relieved by hearing her address him as “*vous*.” He begged a cigarette of me, and insisted that I light it for him, an operation requiring considerable skill in his unsteady, semi-speechless condition. Then he must needs drink my health, clinking his glass drunkenly against mine, which attention was not greatly to my relish. We feared he intended to attach himself to us for the rest of the evening, but fortunately he soon lurched out, to the evident relief of Mme. Hamono.

She was a sweet, refined woman with the bloom of youthful beauty still apparent in fresh color and fair hair; but the struggle of life showed itself in the tired eyes; already her face was marred by the loss of several teeth. She seemed to possess a broader view of the outside world than most of the simple country folk, and she talked charmingly. She had once known *une Anglaise* (we were of course British), named “Mees Armstrong” who had taught her to say “good morning,” “good night,” “bad boy” and a few

other expressions which she remembered astonishingly well and pronounced with the delicious accent of all French women when trying to overcome the absurd intricacies of our tongue. After she had obligingly spoken a few words of Breton for us, we started to go. But to our surprise, she refused to accept any *pour-boire*; and it was only after persuasion that she consented to take a few coppers for the three kiddies whom she had just sent to bed.

The next morning, furnished with explicit directions from *Madame*, the Veuve Launay, we set out to see the Château Bellevue. It lies a kilometer or so from the town, and thence we intended to go across country via the old Moulin des Pins to the ruins of the Seigneurie de Vauclerc, passing the Château des Granges on the way. Bellevue we found a modern country residence. Des Granges we found also and, though it was evidently occupied, we were able to approach quite near to its severe façade. But Vauclerc seemed to have disappeared from the face of the globe. After tramping for several miles in the wrong direction under a broiling sun, we finally retraced our steps and found the Moulin, a deserted mill on the edge of a sighing pine wood. Had we known, the old chapel of the Seigneurie was only a few hundred yards distant; but, being used as a farm house, it naturally did not reveal itself to us

and we wandered still further from our goal.

At last, hot, exhausted but determined, we happened upon a frowzy mud village. I called through a stable door to someone who appeared to be talking to the cows; and out came a genuine "nut-cracker," very old and minus most of his front teeth. He happened to be going by Vauclerc he said, and would guide us himself, for we could never find the way from directions — certainly a truth. Over fields and through tiny lanes he took us, panting and thirsty with the heat of the noon-day sun, while at his side calmly swung the bottle of cider for which our mouths were watering. And all the time he chatted and asked countless questions in his naïve, peasant way. Something seemed wrong with our comprehension or the expression of it; for as often as we said "*oui*" — meaning "yes" in the French tongue and intended to convey the impression that we understood — the old fellow would repeat from the beginning all that he had just been saying.

But he was a genial soul, and when we reached the gate of the Seigneurie,—which, with the chapel-farm-house comprised the entire ruins,—he told us that it had been built by the devil in a single night. "But that's only a legend, you know," said he reassuringly, and went on to say that he was sure the devil had masons to help him. "You have masons in America?" he added doubt-

ingly — we had mentioned whence we came. When I remarked, to make conversation, that America was pretty far from France, he merely shrugged his shoulders and answered, "*Ça se peut*; I was never there myself." Then he marched us on the road to Moncontour without giving us a chance to photograph the ruins we had struggled so hard to see. So when we had shaken hands at the parting of our ways, I thought to make up for the loss by the picture of our guide himself. But the same inane fear of possible expense overcame him as had seized Mère Lambert; and in this case no arguments were convincing. Muttering something about the hay needing him and his face not being pretty, he scurried down the road, leaving us with shamed feelings as though we had insulted him.

XI

We Make Several Mistakes

MISTAKES will happen in the most Heaven-blest of trips and Loudéac was such a mistake. The drive thither was uneventful, and the town itself so uninteresting that nothing had ever happened there. I am well aware that there are a thousand such towns in my own country, but one does not expect to find them in Brittany. The hotel was wretched. And to add to our depression, in the morning while we were trying to eat our breakfast of unclean butter and bitter coffee at a dirty table on the sidewalk and only awaiting Bergère's pleasure in order to shake the dust of Loudéac from our feet, a most pitiful procession wound down the dusty street. It was a child's funeral. At the head of the long line walked the father, hat in hand, and under his arm the small white coffin. The only compensation in the pathetic poverty was the great crowd of people, reverently following the little body to its last abode.

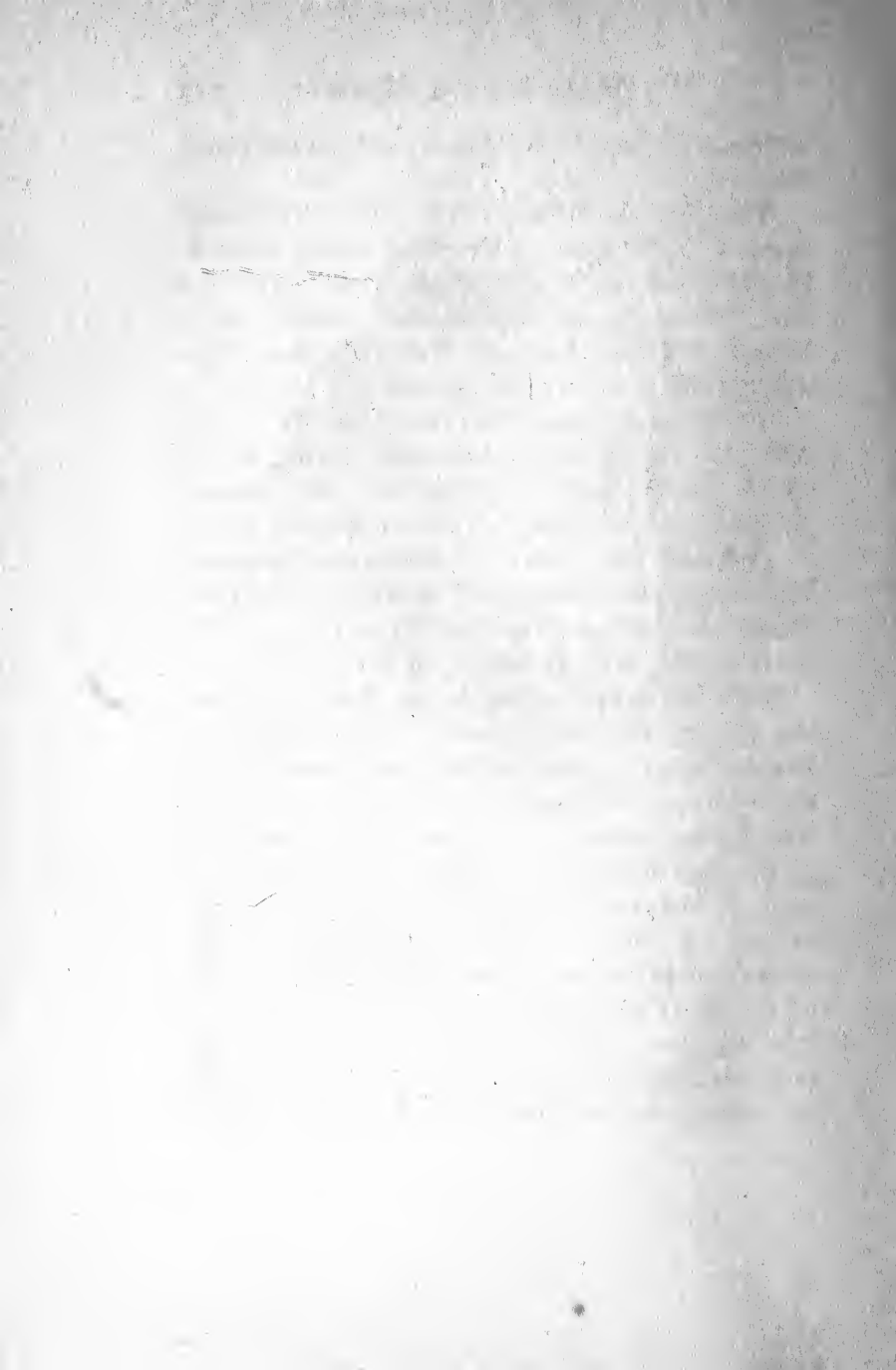
Having got the mail — our one compensation for Loudéac — we gladly turned Bergère's head again towards Moncontour. At Plougenast we

stopped for luncheon at an inn where we had already scraped acquaintance with the landlady. Hers was a very modest establishment, and while she was cooking a savory omelette on the great hearth, Decima and I fell to unharnessing Bergère. After considerable labor and much trepidation lest she run away, we led her into the wine cellar which acted as stable and tied her with a bit of rope to a stanchion — which she subsequently pulled up by the roots! Then, filled with appreciation of our own virtue, we went to luncheon, leaving Bergère to hers.

Mme. Hamo was an excellent *cuisinière* and a conversationalist to boot. Though her chief interest lay in culinary art, the details of which probably appealed to Decima more than to me, she could ask countless questions — and sensible ones, too — about England. And I fear we must have appeared sadly ignorant in regard to “our own country.” The interrogations brought out many contrasts between the Anglo-Saxon and the French ideas of contentment. How many workmen, American or English, would work without complaint and actually save money, earning three francs for a hard, twelve-hour day? Finally the baby — the apple of the mother’s eye and the never failing topic of conversation when others lacked — was roused for admiration. At the end I was obliged to kiss the brat, while Decima as-



*I was obliged to kiss
the brat.*



sumed a far-away expression and escaped scot free!

It seemed like home to be in Moncontour once more, to climb again to the little rooms, to sit in the same stiff chairs with Marie to serve us. All unbeknownst to me, Decima had bought her a trinket, and how the poor creature's eyes spoke as she tried to express her gratitude!

Dinner over, we strolled down hill for a chat with our friend Mme. Hamono, buying a few sweets for the children on the way. She seemed glad to see us and was vastly amazed to learn that English and "American" are the same language. But a pleasant evening was marred, as the poor woman refused to accept pay for our *bocks* "because we had been so nice to the little ones."

Early the next morning we set forth in a pouring rain to visit the Chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut, situated on top of a hill some distance from the town, and reached only by a steep wood-path. The farmer who was the custodian of the keys gladly lent them to us — huge iron affairs they were — and we explored the sanctuary undisturbed. It was small and crude and quite deserted except for a row of wooden saints. Each of the seven was supposed to be able to cure certain maladies, which occult powers the quaint figures advertised in naïve manner. But in a country where the *pour-boire* reigns supreme, even

saints will not work without compensation; so beneath the shelf on which they perched was a *tronc* with seven slots in it, each labeled with a name corresponding to one of the figures. But I fear the Bretons of the locality do not receive the individual treatment for which they pay. We, being incredulous foreigners, tested the *tronc* to find that, instead of being divided into seven compartments — a proper arrangement if each saint was to receive his due share of the tips — there was merely a large box into which all the pennies fell in a promiscuous heap, regardless of the saint for whom they were intended.

Without even waiting for luncheon, we started for Lamballe, still in continuous downpour. Furthermore, we must needs try to visit the Château de La Touche-Trébry on the way. The Veuve Launay had not been very explicit; she had merely said, "Take the first road to the right," and we took it, though it looked narrow and unpromising. However, we drove persistently on over a road growing ever more rocky and steep. Almost before I realized it, we were face to face with a sunken boulder which completely blocked the way. To stand on the precipitous hillside was impossible. The cart began to slip slowly backwards, Bergère's hoofs scraping frantically over the smooth stone. Just as I was about to jump out and hold her head to prevent the death

of all three of us, she gave a wild lurch and I pitched out into the road. A horrible vision of steel-clad hoofs and viciously revolving red wheels, the grinding of wood and metal against cold stone chilled my blood. Then darkness seemed to fall over me.

My next sensation was a great surprise at finding myself, a crumpled heap, in a pool of muddy water. Aside from a slightly dazed feeling, I was my normal self; why should I be sitting thus, soaked with rain, alone in the middle of the country road? I must get up or ruin my only suit of clothes. But how did I come there? How — then suddenly it all rushed into my mind, leaving me in an agony of fear. Decima! — where was she?

“My God, she can’t have been killed!” I groaned; then, “But where is she? Where’s Bergère? Where’s the cart? There must be something left!” I staggered to my feet. By a miracle no bones were broken. I lurched blindly down the hill. At the bottom there was no sign of Decima. Mingled feelings of relief and anxiety filled my heart. “Decima! Decima!” I called futilely, breaking into a painful run. On, on until I reeled like a drunken man, and my shouts turned to sobs. Suddenly there was a wild pounding of hoofs, and a familiar voice sounded in the distance urging on a horse.

Another moment and the cart dashed round a corner, Decima leaning forward and flogging the tired beast into a gallop. At sight of me she sawed madly at the reins and ground on the brake. "Peter!" she called, her voice quavering pitifully, "Thank God you're safe!" and she slipped insensible to the floor of the cart.

As we drove the trembling, sweat-covered animal quietly back to Moncontour, I heard the story — how Bergère had miraculously turned the cart in the narrow lane without trampling me under foot; how she had plunged down the hill and dashed on for two miles at breakneck speed with Decima clinging to the dashboard, every moment expecting to be hurled out; how finally she had been controlled and turned once more in my direction. "The rest you know," said Decima, already perfectly self-possessed. I did indeed know and marveled at her courage and coolness — for she is a tiny thing, is my sister. We were very silent as we entered Moncontour.

The exhilaration which follows an accident narrowly missed soon passed and left us tired. But by the time our clothes were dried and luncheon was over, youth was again buoyant and we vowed to see La Touche-Trébry or die in the attempt. The weather showed no indication of clearing — indeed, the supply of moisture in Bre-





ton clouds seems on occasion well nigh inexhaustible — only this time we were more particular in our demands for information as to the route. We arrived wet and bedraggled. Seeing a scaffolding which betokened alterations, it never occurred to me that the family who owned it might be occupying the *château*. So I drove brazenly into the court-yard and accosting a woman at the window, asked if one might *visiter* the building. She replied very politely that one might indeed, and soon a servant appeared as guide. Whereupon we learned that the lady whom I had hailed was none other than the *châteline* herself; and that she would be glad to have us take tea with her after we had seen her domain. We declined shamefacedly, aghast at our effrontery and the courtesy with which the lady had met it.

The *château* was a curious mixture of fortified manor and modern residence and farm-house. But the pleasure of the visit was alloyed with the realization that we were unbidden guests. We hurried away through the wooded park, on towards Lamballe. Drenched with rain, yet perfectly content, we must have been a curious sight as we drove along the highway, deserted of other vehicles. I cannot wonder that two little girls mistook us for devils and crossed themselves surreptitiously!

Finally we arrived at Lamballe and had to be-

take ourselves to bed during the clothes drying process. And a wedding party, tramping through muddy streets to the tune of an accordion, was the last sound we heard that night as we slipped into exhausted slumber. Truly, it was almost as pathetic as that other procession at Loudéac.

XII

The Pardon of Saint-Amateur

THE song of many bells apprised us of the fact that the day of the Pardon, the day to which we had looked forward so long, was at hand. An air of expectancy seemed to hang over the little town, thronged with folk from every nearby village, keeping the crowds strangely quiet. Only the continuous shuffle of heavy shoes and the low murmur of many voices betokened the unusual.

The *Pardon de Saint-Amateur* took place at half past two under a dull sky that lent additional solemnity to the serious scene. There were no curious costumes, no happy music, no wealth of color — only a certain sabbatical primness and discomfort in the black coats and frocks. Yet the earnestness, the reverence, the faith of these silent worshippers impressed me as I have rarely been impressed by religious ceremony.

The Hôtel de France looks up a narrow street which slopes gently from the central square of Lamballe. In this Place Cornemuse, outside the Église Saint-Jean, the crowd collected for the procession, which was to form there, descend the hill, make a circuit of the block and end again

at the Church for service. Eagerly we hung from the windows (in company with a fox-terrier named "Thom"), watching the shifting throng — a dark, restless sea, dotted here and there with the bird-like caps of simple country women. Then from an eddy in the midst broke forth a thin current: the Pardon had begun.

At the head of the procession paced the village beadle, or something very much resembling such a personage, clearing the way with a mighty halberd for a silken banner bearing the words "*Sainte Marie Priez Pour Nous.*" Behind, stretched in two single files — one on each side of the street — the men and women who had come to participate in the ceremony. Every age there was, and every condition. An old man bent with years hobbled slowly behind a young mother carrying her sleeping child in her arms. Farmer and burgher, peasant girl and well-dressed woman of means, rich and poor — all were united in a common faith. Many bore wax effigies to present at the church — effigies of an arm, a head, a foot, in plea of a cure or in recognition of past blessings from the saint. Here an old *paysanne*, pitifully lame, struggled along, her face radiant with calm hope. Many are the sick and crippled in the long files that round the corner with solemn step, the men bare-headed, the women with downcast eyes, all with unaffected earnestness. At



Finally came the Gymnastes.



intervals between the rows walked a white-robed priest, the furtive air of professionalism in his piety contrasting unpleasantly with the simplicity of the layman's faith.

There was a break in the long files. Then passed the orphans — meek girls, each with a blue ribbon round her neck. More ordinary folk followed, giving way in turn to coarse-gowned nuns. Still more lay-folk and then came a little knot of priests, preceding the most sacred part of the *fête* — a precious relic, encased in a glass casket. One priest was playing a dirge-like melody on a deep-chested French horn. The others chanted a mournful litany. Behind walked two peasants bearing on their shoulders the casket, their browned, bearded faces standing out against the pale, shaven countenances of the clerics. Again more populace, now with banners — of the roof-makers' guild, of the Masons, of other secular organizations, but always with some emblem or motto of religion, some prayer to the Virgin emblazoned on them.

Finally came the *gymnastes* — boys from fourteen to twenty, clad in a most ridiculous costume of sky-blue, half-sleeved jerseys and bloomers, with white Tam-o'-Shanters from which depended blue tassels. Over each scrawny right arm was carried a dark blue reefer, except in the case of those in the front ranks who formed a fife and

drum corps. These wore their jackets, that the vigorous execution of their music might be unimpeded. To an Anglo-Saxon, the incongruity of their attire was ludicrous.

Then the thin stream changed once more into the broad sea of onlookers — a sea that surged and murmured and washed against the sides of the narrow street. The procession, the entire Pardon except for the service in the crowded Church, was finished. The ceremony had been brief, with no glamour, no elaborate show. Yet the visitors who had come to participate must have numbered hundreds. Here, truly, was a people to whom religion was vital.

An attempt to enter the Church would have been futile. Instead we strolled through the streets, watching the gradual transition from the solemnity of religious service to the festivity of national celebration. At a photographer's we stopped to inquire after films. But the gentleman had deserted his shop, and after waiting for half an hour in company with an absurd looking *gymnaste* — who was smoking a ragged cigarette and appeared much in need of a bath and a shave — went elsewhere in search. The druggist to whom we applied had evidently done ample justice to the Fête Nationale. He regretted politely that he had no films of the size we desired, but at our suggestion that we might find them in Jugon the

next day, the implied comparison seemed to irritate him considerably. "Jugon!" he echoed loftily; "*Jugon, c'est un tout petit trou!*" and he bowed us haughtily, if somewhat unsteadily, to the door.

In the evening the village band played in the public square in honor of the holiday. The place was crowded — with patriots, we confidently imagined, mindful of the Bastille, jealous of the glory of the Republic. But when the first stirring strains of the "*Marseillaise*" fell upon the night air, not a hat was raised, not a man stood at attention. It brought to mind another Fourteenth of July, a number of years before, in Tours; when the only enthusiasm displayed was a rather caustic humor at the expense of an obese general who tried in vain to scale the flanks of his horse. We left in disgust and returned to the hotel. Here we found a Dutchman who shared our sentiments. Besides his own unspeakable language, he spoke wretched English, fair French and beautiful German. The result was a pleasant, if somewhat polyglot evening, spent in the discussion of patriotism.

XIII

A Charming Hole

JUST how and why we went to Jugon I am uncertain. However, that is an unimportant detail; suffice it that we got there. The cynical pharmacist at Lamballe had characterized Jugon as a "*tout petit trou*"; we found it delightful. There was little to see and less to do in the town itself; in so far it compared with Loudéac of unpleasant memory. But between the utter monotony of the one and the restful charm of the other there was an immeasurable gap.

Doubtless the freshness, the hospitality of the inn, its quaint *estaminet*, and its delicious meals helped to sharpen the contrast. Like its namesake at Hédé, the tiny Hôtel de l'Écu was linked with the name of the Duchesse Anne. It was once a convent founded by her within a stone's throw of her castle; and on the great slab of stone which formed the kitchen fireplace, we saw her coat-of-arms. Of the château not a trace remained; the hill which it had crowned was now the inn-keeper's vegetable garden.

The *auberge* faced the village square, at one end of which was the market — a building

perched on an open arcade, like the *broletti* of Lombardy. Across the street stood the Maison Sevoy, which must have been almost a château itself in its day — A. D. 1611. Now it was merely a farmhouse, the hall converted into a stable, the vast hearth filled with hay. And in another corner of the square was the village pump, placarded with a warning that this indispensable engine was open from six to eight in the morning and four to six in the evening. As the inhabitants seemed to prefer the former hour, there was but little sleeping in the Hôtel de l'Écu after six in the morning. For the pump was old and rusty.

As for the remaining objects of interest in Jugon, they consisted in the thirteenth century tower in the midst of an otherwise modern church and — the pond! The Étang de Jugon was four kilometers long and the pride of the town. I fear our lack of enthusiasm for so tremendous an inland body of water must have been a disappointment to the citizens.

Jugon was the starting point of a little excursion, long to be remembered. Leaving our luggage at the inn, we set forth to find the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey of Bôquen, which was situated just inside the two-thousand-acre forest of the same name. Had we known what was in store for us, I doubt if we should have had the courage to make the attempt.

The road led past the Château de la Moussaye. The present edifice was of the most uninteresting period of French architecture, but four towers and a few crenelated walls of an older structure were still standing. And in the courtyard lingered several broken supports and a complete arch, ivy-covered, suggestive of other days. From the old château, a subterranean passage once ran fourteen kilometers to the castle in Broons, now destroyed, where Du Guesclin was born.

The ruined abbey was not marked on our map, and the *Guide Joanne* warned us that we ought to have either a detailed plan or a competent guide. Nevertheless, we were obstinately determined on finding it for ourselves. Stopping at a rough inn to make inquiries, we were told that it was only two kilometers distant and easily found. Without even knowing the name of the hamlet in which the *auberge* was situated we confidently left Bergère in the hands of a strange man, and struck into the woods. At the outset a woman offered her services as guide, vouchsafing the information that we could never find the ruins unless we knew the way. But we disliked her evil face even more than the thought of getting lost. And besides, her assumption of helplessness on our part was irritating. So we rashly refused. Whereupon she followed us for a quarter of a mile, peering at us from behind a fringe of trees as we wallowed





in mud up to our shoe-tops in one of the gullies which seem usually to form the Breton country lane. However, when she saw that we continued to pay no attention to her, she disappeared suddenly, leaving us very much alone.

Two kilometers, forsooth! It could not have been less than five, and it seemed fifty. The road was fully as atrocious as that to the Château de la Hunaudaye, if not even more so, while the sun was hotter than I could have believed possible in the temperate zone. But far worse than either of these difficulties was the problem of finding the way. Countless paths ran off in every direction, any of which might have been the right one, and how were we to know? Naturally, being in a "forest," there was no one of whom we might inquire.

The miracle was that we ever got there. Poor Decima was nearly exhausted, but would not admit it. I was in almost as bad a plight myself, and did admit it with frequent groans. But the impossible does happen on occasion; in every blind choice of paths which we made, we struck the right one. Suddenly we emerged from the woods and found ourselves on an open hill-top, looking down on the ruins below.

Quite roofless they were, with the branches of giant trees protruding above ivy-draped walls. A great arcade was walled up, and the encroaching

ground had risen half way to the Romanesque capitals. Only the choir of the church was of the fourteenth century; the rest of the building had been founded in 1137 by a lord of Dinan. Several farmhouses nestled about the ruins, looking suspiciously like adaptations of chapel, chapter-house or what not. Into one of these houses we were invited by a kindly old woman who was grinding fresh pig into most unattractive-looking sausage, and who revived us for the return trip with some welcome cider. We had little time to spare, for it had taken us an hour and a half to find the abbey, instead of the "little half hour" which our friend at the inn had cheerfully calculated, and it was still far to drive before dinner. Then back again we labored over the same fearful roads, till at last the inn hove in sight once more. While Bergère was being harnessed, we had a heated argument with three countrymen — one of whom addressed each of us as "*tu!*" — as to the distance we had covered and none would admit that it was more than two kilometers each way. I cling to the theory of a possible fifty.

A thunder storm kept us awake during the first half of the night, and the village pump achieved the same end during the second half. Consequently, when we hobbled down to breakfast, stiff in every joint from our exertions of the day before, we simultaneously proposed a day's rest.

It was deliciously pleasant to do nothing, for there was no feeling of guilt at missing anything: there was nothing to miss. So we sat in the *estaminet* and wrote letters; and sat under the awning in front of the inn and watched the sleepy little town. There goes the priest on his rounds, a Bible tucked under his arm. Down the hill, past the Maison Sevoy, comes an old cripple pulled in a little cart at a rattling pace by two panting dogs. Across the way, a team stops at the smithy amid a volley of snaps from the long whip. And everywhere the women are working as hard as the men, trudging along the dusty street under great loads of faggots, or weighed down with buckets of water. The extraordinary thing is that many of them should be so well dressed — far better than at Lamballe, which despises this town as an “entirely small hole.” Their blouses fit (so Decima says) and, wonder of wonders, their skirts are hobble!

That night there was no thunder, and the pump seemed strangely quiet. It was all that was necessary to complete our day of rest.

XIV

The Ejection of Jean Marie Pihuit

(A drama in one act)

Scene: *Estaminet de l'Hotel de l'Écu, Jugon.*

Time: Half past six of a July afternoon.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ:

M. SOQUET, patron of the "Shield."

MME. SOQUET.

HER SISTER, the maid-of-all-work.

AN OFFICER OF THE *Octroi*.

DECIMA, an American lady.

PETER, her brother.

JEAN MARIE PIHUIT, an inebriate.

COLLARLESS PERSONAGE.

Postman, Villagers, etc.

At the rising of the curtain, all the clients of the hotel are engaged in drinking and smoking except Decima, who is drinking and writing.

DECIMA

[*Suddenly, in English.*] Is someone looking over my shoulder?

PETER

[*Looking up and discovering Inebriate in straw*

hat and rough clothes swaying slightly back of Decima and trying vainly to read her writing.]
Why, so there is! [*Glares at Inebriate.*]

M. SOQUET

[*Noticing Inebriate, who pays no attention to glares.*] Here, now — that does not go.

[*Inebriate bangs into table. Decima and Peter glare in concert.*]

M. SOQUET

Get out of here. I don't want you.

INEBRIATE

But why? I paid for a drink yesterday.

M. SOQUET

But what a drink — only a little glass!

INEBRIATE

I paid for a glass yesterday and I'll pay again to-day.

M. SOQUET

Never mind that, I don't want your money.
Get out.

INEBRIATE

[*Sitting down.*] *Jamais.*

M. SOQUET

[*Red in the face but rather timidly.*] Go on

— I don't want you here.

INEBRIATE

Jamais! [Bangs table with his fist; the glasses dance dangerously. All conversation ceases and all interest centers in Inebriate.]

MME. SOQUET

[Very decidedly — she is the man of the household.] Allez — fletz.

INEBRIATE

Jamais.

OFFICER OF OCTROI

[Important looking functionary with great mustache and stomach.] Get along, you.

INEBRIATE

Jamais.

OFFICER OF OCTROI

[Rising and laying hand on Inebriate's arm.]
You'd better for your own good.

INEBRIATE

Jamais.

OFFICER OF OCTROI

[Lifting Inebriate and pushing him gently.]
I've spoken it once; I won't speak it again.

INEBRIATE

[Folding arms in Napoleonic attitude.] But no — it is not right.

COLLARLESS PERSONAGE

[*From distant corner.*] Get along thou! What dost thou wish to do? If the gentleman does not wish to serve thee, there is nothing to do. Think thou! — suppose it were in thine own house? *Va-t-en, alors!*

INEBRIATE

[*Weakening.*] *Mais —*

OFFICER OF OCTROI

[*Seeing opportunity for heroic bravery.*] Name of a pipe, march!

INEBRIATE

[*Sadly.*] *Eh b'en, I go. Adi'u, adi'u, adi'u.* [*Shakes hands with Officer of Octroi, Collarless Personage, M. Soquet, Mme. Soquet, etc., and exit, sorrowfully, to tell history of his life to crowd on sidewalk. Officer of Octroi walks importantly back to table, sits down, puffs cigarette — a present from admiring postman — tells how it was done, finishes drink, shakes hands with all present, removes hat, exit. Exeunt omnes. Curtain.*]

XV

The Little Sisters

THERE are apparently numberless hostelrys in Brittany known as the Hôtel de France. Mme. Legault keeps a very nice one at Broons, a morning's drive from Jugon. She furnished us an excellent lunch which, in the absence of the maid-of-all-work, was served by her pretty but somewhat haughty daughter. When she found that we were bound for Caulnes, she strongly advised that we go via Yvignac, so as to see a château there and pay a visit to her sister-in-law, who likewise kept an inn. While we were waiting for Bergère, we stepped across the square to see the church, which Madame assured us was "of a beautiful style," and found it without any style at all. This rather discouraged us, but still we decided to essay Yvignac.

On arriving *chez* Legault at this place, we presented our credentials so to speak, and were most hospitably received. After inquiring about the health of her relatives in Broons, Madame started us off on the road to the Château d'Yvignac with her daughter Victorine, aged eleven, perched on Decima's lap to act as guide. The road was of

the ravine type, and Victorine was so shy that she let us drive several hundred unnecessary yards before she could summon sufficient courage to tell us that we had passed the lane which led to our destination. And even when she had screwed up her courage to the point of advising us of our mistake, she was so afflicted with a cold in her little tow head, that it took us several hundred yards more to discover what she was trying to say.

The château was to all intents and purposes nothing more than a big farmhouse. To be sure, it had been begun just before the Revolution as a handsome residence; but after the turmoil subsided, it had never been completed as originally intended; most of the windows had been blocked up and rough floors hastily added to enable the house to serve its present purpose. We climbed to the second story under the guidance of Victorine, where the keeper, a doting mother, regaled us for half an hour on weak cider and stories about her progeny — an infant called Madeleine and a nine year old boy cursed with the name of John-Mary. Finally she condescended to show us the château, though there proved little to see. Even the vaults, which sounded so full of possibilities, were disappointing; for the subterranean passage had fallen into bad repair, and was closed to curious Anglo-Saxons by a stout wooden door. On one wall of

the building, however, were traces of an older château, and a short distance away was a crumbling, mossy tower, the intervening space being marked as the ancient courtyard by scattered cobblestones half hidden in the earth.

The church at Yvignac had partly escaped the ravages of local religious enthusiasm, though Mme. Legault informed us that it was only under compulsion that the inhabitants refrained from remodeling the entire church. That being the case, it is a pity that compulsion isn't more prevalent in Brittany, for even this church had not been wholly unmolested. However, the west portal and the first four bays of the nave were true Romanesque, the portly columns being topped with most delightful capitals. The tower, though remade, followed the twelfth century original, and gave a very striking effect as it rose above the entrance. And what a cunning little child's seat and prayer-stool within the church!

At Caulnes the chief object of interest was a gypsy van encamped across the way from the hotel. It seemed to contain an entire family in ease and comfort, and suggested all sorts of fascinating possibilities for a future trip. But this family was the proud possessor of a duck, which was tethered outside the wagon and began making harsh noises at half past four in the morning. Furthermore, the breakfast dishes were washed

in the family tub; which cooled somewhat our ardor for that mode of travel.

Our own breakfast over, we started on the long drive to Hédé, sad at the realization that this was to be our last day on the road. It had all gone inconceivably fast; it was hard to believe that the next afternoon we must be in Rennes, worse still, in Paris. But if it was the final day of our little *vacances*, we were at least resolved that it should be a good one. So we purposed seeing two groups of Druidical monuments that were marked on the map as existing between Caulnes and Hédé; one group we would see in the morning, the other in the afternoon.

But even the most laudable plans often miscarry. At Guitté we stopped to purchase information at the cost of two "*pétroles*"—as we heard a fellow traveler jocularly term cognac—and the lady, while willing, was ignorant. Finally, after consultation with several neighbors, each of whom offered a different suggestion, she told us to drive a mile or so further to an inn called "Paradise" and that there they would direct us.

Perhaps we weren't up to celestial standard. Whatever the cause, an old fellow with exactly one tooth in his gnarled head, who might easily have been St. Peter himself, "met us at the gate" and—turned us away. His excuse was that

there was no one at home. No one at home in Paradise! The idea was depressing, if not actually preposterous. However, if we were not acceptable, we must give in gracefully; I thought with real sympathy of M. Pihuit at Jugon. So we turned sorrowfully away, in further search of information, and ultimate lunch.

We found neither, in the vicinity. The highway crept through the most beautiful scenery we had yet seen — real hills, real heather, even a real valley with miniature men and women turning tiny bundles of hay, far below us. But never an inn, nor sign of a menhir.

The Continental breakfast seems by noon rather inadequate to the average American. Saint-Pern found us ravenous. As a result, when we were informed that we must go back the other side of Guitté to find any monuments; and that, the map notwithstanding, there were none in the neighborhood of Saint-Pern, flesh overcame the spirit. Luncheon had to console us for the lost *Pierres Druidiques*.

Saint-Pern is the seat of a great novitiate of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The old custodian who admitted us through the stout gate even claimed that it was the Mother House, the head of the order throughout all Christendom. *Les Petites-Sœurs*, he went on, were at that moment there making their divine offices, but one would

come soon to conduct us. So we waited under the shade of a tall, cool hedge, and I furtively smoked. The Sabbath calm, the warm golden sunlight, were just beginning to make us drowsy, when a soft step sounded on the neat gravel path. I quickly trod on my cigarette. Round the corner came a frail, sweet-faced Sister, clad in the familiar garb. I uncovered reverently; they do a great, good work, these Little Sisters.

"You are from America, are you not?" she asked in gentle, perfect English. "The *concierge* told us that there were two strangers here who said they were Americans, and the Mother gave me permission to show you the novitiate. I served two years in Baltimore," she added simply, looking at us directly for the first time. "Do you know it?"

I could only gasp amazedly. Decima answered, "Why, Baltimore is our home, Sister!" Sister Marthe smiled momentarily. "It is nice to see you. I was very happy there."

An hour or more we wandered through the grounds, chatting quietly with the Little Sister, seeing all the great complex organization, learning many things that it is well for skeptical Protestants to know. The vast, shining kitchen where a few cook for the many; the bare, high-ceiled refectory; the broad, fruitful fields tilled by the Sisters; the little church, the beginning and end

of their simple life — we saw it all. And for every year passed in this peaceful atmosphere, there must be many spent in hard, often thankless, service in foreign places. Their only pleasure is in the serving of others. Truly the world must be a better place because of the Little Sisters.

A bell tolled and Sister Marthe bade us a hurried farewell. There had been not the slightest question of our faith; nor any appeal for support. It was a real pleasure to slip a few silver pieces into the *tronc* by the gate. The afternoon had been far better spent than if we had seen a dozen menhirs.

The last day on the road passed all too rapidly — the last day of the magpies and poppies and bees, of the bright sun or the dull, gray monochrome that had grown almost equally dear to us, of the fragrant new-mown hay; the last day of the simple, country life and the kindly, unspoiled folk. The familiar spire of the little church at Hédé told us more eloquently than any words that our journey was almost finished.

The hotel was exactly as we had left it. The rosy-cheeked girl was just as cheerful and willing and happy as before, *Madame* looked quite as tired, *Monsieur* had lost nothing of his fondness for cards and *pétrole*; even our rooms were identical, unless it was that a little more dust had collected on the two plaster “ornaments” in my

nook under the eaves. Only we were changed. Our faces wore no longer the paleness of those who dwell in cities; Brittany had made us anew. But our spirits were damped by the approach of the end.

XVI

The End of the Road

ON top of our regret at the finish of our little tour; in addition to our sorrow at parting from Bergère, it seemed almost too much that the memory of our first love, Hédé, should be marred by perfidy. Yet such is Fate. And the worst of it all was the remorse we felt at leaving so bad an impression on Bergère just at the end, after we had pampered her and seen her filled to bursting each day for three weeks.

We left Hédé early and in haste, so as to reach Rennes in time for luncheon. Great was our wrath, when we had driven the curiously weary little animal a few miles, to find that the card-playing scoundrel at the inn had neither watered her nor given her anything to eat that morning — nay, even the night before, so far as we knew. And this in spite of unusually generous fees for his supposedly good care of her. Though we could ill afford the time, we stopped at the first tavern and saw that she had a square meal and a large bucket of water, both of which disappeared with pitiful rapidity. “Poor little mouse!” murmured Decima.

Our only consolation in giving up Bergère had been the thought that she would fairly trumpet with glee at being reunited with "Thiriot and the 'boys,'" as Decima expressed it. When she not only showed no signs of joy at the sight of the Rue de Viarmes, but actually turned a dejected brown head and watched us plaintively out of sight after we had kissed her good-by on the end of her velvety nose, our hearts were nearly broken. Decima looked as though she wanted to cry, and I had an odd lump just above my collar.

"They'll work her to death, now that they see she is so plump," groaned Decima after the stableman had noted her condition with amazement. "Yes," I agreed; "and I *know* she'll never get so much to eat again." Now that I come to think it over in cold blood, it's probably just as well for her if she doesn't!

Late that night we were in Paris once more. The frantic struggle to see many friends in a scant while, the opera, the Louvre — all the usual tourist activities in Paris, with an unusual gala performance at the *Français*, where all the members of the company who were not acting sat in the orchestra to watch Mounet-Sully take the leading part in "*Horace*" — and then three days later found us watching France grow gray in the misty haze of the horizon.

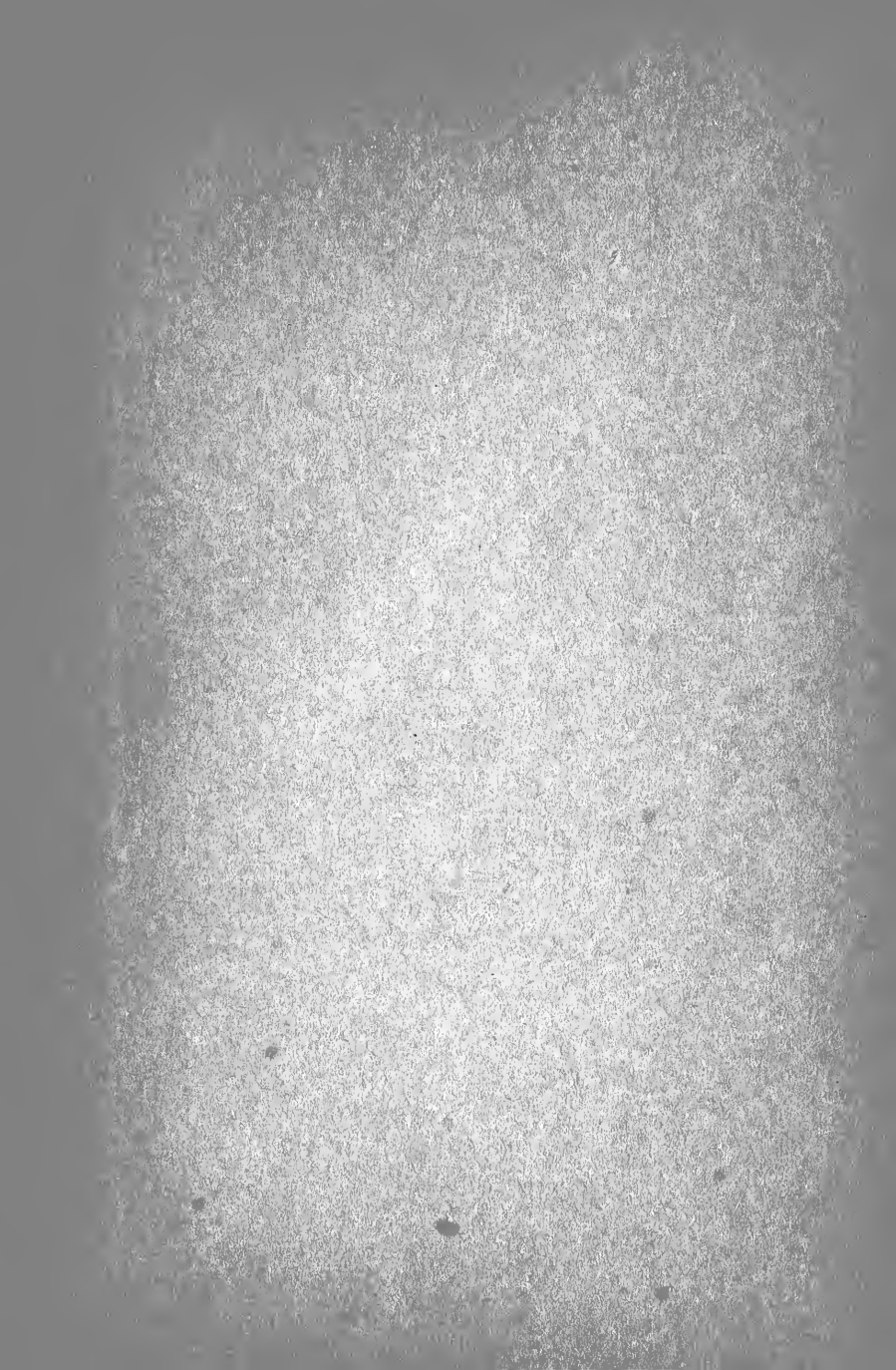
"Oh, Peter, our holiday is over and *she'll*

never have another," sighed Decima, her thoughts turning to a small brown horse. We had reached the end of the road.











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